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15 JUNE 1910

THE

CHRISTIAN

CONTEMPLATED

IN A

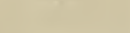
COURSE OF LECTURES,

DELIVERED IN

ARGYLE CHAPEL, BATH.

BY WILLIAM JAY.

Behold the awful portrait, and admire:
Nor stop to wonder—imitate and live.
YOUNG.



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PREFACE.

Custom seems to have rendered it almost necessary, for an Author never to appear before the public without a Preface; in which something, if not concerning himself, yet concerning his work is looked for, as a respect due to his readers. Yet Rosseau says, it is a part of the book never read, unless by women and children. The Author however indulges a hope that this is not very extensively true; since, in writing the following introductory remarks, he certainly intended, as will appear from their length, something more than a ceremonious conformity to example.

The design of this Series of Lectures was—to diversify a little the ordinary course of ministerial instruction—to excite and secure attention by a degree of allowable novelty and curiosity—and to bring together various things pertaining to the same subject; so that they might aid each other in illustration and improvement, by their arrangement and union.

But why publish them? The writer is aware what an abundance of religious works is perpetually issuing from the press: and he would not wonder, if some should think that *he* has too often appeared before the public already. Yet he trusts an author is not necessarily supposed to say to his readers, "Now attend only to me." Surely many publications may be serviceable for different purposes, and in different degrees; and a writer may be allowed to conclude, that the production of his pen may obtain a measure of welcome and useful attention—without the vanity of supposing that it is superior to every other, or the folly of expecting that it is to supersede any other. If too the author be a public teacher, and has met with acceptance, it is natural to suppose that he will secure a considerable number of connections more immediately his own, and who will be rather partial to the writer, for the sake of the preacher. Such was the case here. In two or three days after this Course of Lectures was finished, a large number of copies was called and subscribed for by those who had heard them.

Many of these applicants were persons whose opinion and desire would have had weight with any one who knew them; while all of them had claims upon the preacher, as stated, or occasional parts of his audience.

The Author can truly say that he yielded to publish with a reluctance which only an *ascertained* earnestness could have overcome. Yet he is now glad, especially with regard to his own audience, that the importunity was expressed, and has been complied with. For near thirty-five years he has been labouring to serve his present charge, in the unity of the Spirit, and in the bond of peace, and he hopes he may add, in righteousness of life: and though he commenced his connection young, yet such a period strikes far into the brevity of human life, and calls upon him to think, and feel, and act, with increasing seriousness and diligence, knowing that the night cometh wherein no man can work, and to be concerned that after his decease, his people may be able to have the things he has spoken always in remembrance. The work, therefore, as a brief epitome of his preaching, will serve as a kind of ministerial legacy to be perused, particularly by the younger members of his church and congregation, when the clods of the valley will be sweet about him; and by which, though dead, he may yet speak—perhaps, in some cases, to more purpose than while living. The work may tend to correct some pious mistakes both on the right hand, and on the left. It contains many of the Author's views on important subjects after considerable experience and observation. For such remarks his station has been favourable, and his opportunities numerous; especially from the variety and latitude of his religious intercourse. This has never been confined to Christians of his own denomination. He has not suffered prejudice so to magnify, what his convictions might have led him to consider the mistakes or imperfections of any who differ from him, as to make him overlook their excellencies as individuals or communities; or to prevent his mingling with them in company, and co-operating with them in services; or to deprive him of that pleasure and profit which he knows may be derived from those who cannot frame to pronounce exactly the Shibboleth of a spiritual tribe. He has always preferred to study religion, not in its abstractions, but in its subjects: not in its speculative opinions, but in its practical principles: not in its distant generalities, but in its appropriated and particular influences. He has

always endeavoured to follow it out, from its too common confinement in certain notions, seasons, and services, into actual and ordinary life; and to esteem and applaud it only in proportion as it exerts and displays itself in that "wisdom which is from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."

This may in some measure account for the desire which has given rise to the publication. For it is to be presumed, that there will be some considerable conformity between the views of a minister and the people of his charge after a voluntary, long, and perfectly affectionate connection. It is certain that these Lectures would not have been completely congenial with the taste of some hearers. *They* would in *any* course of religious discussion have said, "We want more of doctrine, and more of Christ." Now we are far from treating these terms *themselves* with contempt or disrespect. We love the doctrines of the Gospel; and believe that it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace. We attach importance to evangelical truth; and have no notion of piety without principle, or of good fruit but from a good tree—This is our creed: "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Yet, we cannot be ignorant that the complaint we have supposed, is too often the whining and seditious jargon of a party; and the very last party in the world we should ever consult with regard to preaching. These desperate adherents to something not easily fixed and definable in sentiment, but always accompanied with a spirit as well known and invariable in its operation, as any of the laws of nature, are, in spiritual things, what some discontented zealots are in political; and as the latter render the cause of rational liberty suspicious and despicable, so the former disserve and disgrace the cause of evangelical religion—They are gospel radicals. They are not always even moral: they are never amiable. They neither pursue, nor think upon the things that are lovely, and of good report. They set at nought all sacred relations, proprieties, and decencies; while many of them abandon family worship, and leave their children without any attempts to

bring them into the way everlasting, not knowing but they may be some of those against whom God "has sworn to have indignation for ever," and not daring to go before him, or to be profane enough to take the work out of his hands. Self-willed are they; self-confident; presumptuous; censorious; condemnatory of all that are not initiated into their temper and exclusions. With regard to their ministers, they are not learners, but judges; and often make a man an offender for a word. In hearing, all is fastidiousness. Appetite has given place to lusting. They go to the house of God, not for wholesome food—they want something to elevate and intoxicate. The preacher is nothing, unless he can make them drink and forget their duty, and remember their danger no more. Their religion is entirely an impersonal thing, any further than as it consists in belief and delusion. They look for all in Christ, not as the only source from which it can be received into us—this is truth: but as the only residence in which it is to remain, while they themselves continue the same. They are complete in him—not as to the all-sufficiency provided in him for their actual and entire recovery; but without their being new creatures. They look after nothing in themselves—and nothing in themselves should be looked for as the ground of their acceptance with God, or as self-derived or self-sustained: but they look after nothing in themselves even as the effect of divine agency and communication—forgetful of the inspired prayer, "Create *in* me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me:" regardless of the assertion, "It is God that worketh *in* you to will and to do of his good pleasure:" subverting the promise, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; and from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you; a new heart also will I give unto you, and a new spirit also will I put within you; and I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them." Their state is not a condition to be submitted to any process of trial, as those enemies to Christian comfort would have it, who admonish persons to examine themselves whether they are in the faith; and to prove their own selves; and to give all diligence to make their calling and election sure. Their peace requires that all this should, without hesitation, be taken for granted; while every thing is to be cried down as unbelief that would dare to lead them to question for an instant their security,

or to keep them from being at ease in Zion. The sinner is not only guilty, but diseased; but they are concerned only to remove the sentence of condemnation, while the disorder is left. They absolve, but not heal: they justify, but not renovate. The king's daughter is all glorious within, while her clothing is of wrought gold: with them the righteousness of Christ is a fine robe to cover a filthy body. All their sin, past, present, and future, is so completely done away, that it were folly to feel anguish on the account of it. Their miscarriages are not theirs; but those of sin that dwelleth in them. Their imperfections are regretless, because unavoidable: no man can keep alive his own soul.

Now we are willing to concede that all those from whom we occasionally hear complaints, do not go into these lengths; and we are persuaded that were there worthier individuals perfectly informed concerning the men we have very truly but inadequately sketched, they would exclaim, "My soul, come not thou into their secret; and mine honour, to their 'system' be not thou united." Yet *they* sometimes murmur, as if in sympathy with them; and borrow their language, unconscious whose technicality it is: and are in danger that their good should be evil spoken of. To be strenuous for evangelical preaching is commendable; but they view the desideratum in too confined an import. They think it, if not improper, yet needless, for a minister to inculcate many things which he *must* feel to be binding upon him. "Oh!" say they, "the grace of God will teach people all this." The grace of God will incline, and enable us to do all this: but it is the Bible that teaches. This contains all our religious information; and we only want to be led into all truth. The sacred writers never left these things to be taught by the grace of God, without instruction. They never instrused them to *inference*. They particularized and enforced them. There is not one of Paul's Epistles, a large proportion of which might not have been spared as impertinent, upon this plea: for as surely as the former parts lay the foundation doctrinally, the latter labour to build us up on our most holy faith. But these would restrain a public teacher from the extensiveness of the Gospel itself; and oblige him to hold forth Christianity only in the first rudiments, not in the advanced science. They would confide him to a kind of abstract inculcation of a small class of principles; which principles are indeed unspeakably important, yet lose much of their importance

itself, by being unaccompanied with certain alliances, and developments, and applications. Yea, they would not willingly allow him to do more than constantly iterate from Sabbath to Sabbath, a few well-known and favoured sentiments, in a manner the most undeviating, and in phraseology the most hackneied. They prefer a scheme of divinity drawn up by some fallible fellow-creature, to the Scripture at large, which, like God's other works, no one can perfectly systematize; but in which, as in nature, we have, instead of mechanism, infinite freshness, and richness, and variety, and irregularity: that is, order beyond our reach. They are sure, if not to oppose, yet not to aid; if not to stigmatize, yet not to countenance and applaud any attempt, the preacher shall make to extend the views of his hearers; to improve their understandings; to lead them through the whole land of Revelation in the length and breadth thereof; in a word, to do any thing that would follow up the recommendation of the Apostle, "Leaving therefore the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection."

Here the Lecturer is unspeakably happy in being able to say to the people he addressess, "Ye have not so learned Christ." He therefore felt no embarrassment in the study or in the delivery of these discourses. He had only to consult his own convictions, and was not necessitated to think of the likings or dislikings of a sickly fancy, a perverted orthodoxy, a party spirit, or an anathematizing bigotry. Neither would he ever consent to officiate in any congregation where he could not stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made him free. This freedom he thinks a preacher cannot too highly value and assert in the discharge of his work—A freedom from the fear of man that bringeth a snare—inducing and enabling him to say, as he rises from his knees to enter the pulpit,

> "Careless, myself a dying man,
> Of dying men's esteem;
> Happy, O God, if thou approve,
> Though all beside condemn."

A freedom (whatever advantages they may afford him by their collectiveness and arrangements) from the fetterings and exclusiveness of human systems of theology—a freedom from the least sense of any obligation requiring him, in the interpretation and improvement of any passage of

Scripture before him, to force its natural and obvious meaning into any frame of Arminian, or Calvinistic theory or authority—a freedom also from spiritual favouritism, and which might lead him, from *partiality*, to shun to declare all the counsel of God, as well as from timidity.

May the Author be permitted to plead for a freedom of another kind?—An exemption from a wish to gratify a few, at the expense of the profit of many: an exemption from fastidiousness of composition and address: an exemption from such a primness of diction, as admits of the introduction of no anecdote, however chaste, and shuts out the seizure of all hints suggested by present feelings and occurrences: an exemption from the too serious apprehension of little faults in seeking to secure great impressions. To the intimidation, and checking of the preacher here, how often is he told of the dignity of the pulpit—as if there was any worthy or *real* dignity in a case like this, separate from utility! What *is* the highest, and *should* be the most admired dignity in the preacher, but an apparent forgetfulness of every claim, but his object; and such an absorbing solicitude for the attainment of it, as leaves him *unable* to notice inferior things? Without such an impression, no man can do a great work gracefully; for if in the execution he is observed to be alive and attentive to any littleness, it will revolt the beholder, instead of pleasing him. An officer in the midst of action, will be all occupied in urging and completing the conflict—what should we think of him if he turned aside after a butterfly, or showed himself at liberty to mind and adjust his ring, or his dress? Let a preacher be as correct as possible; but let him think of founding his consequence upon something above minuteness and finesse. Let him never imagine that his *influence*, or *dignity*, will ever be impaired by his feeling and displaying a noble elevation; an indifference to every thing else—while the love of Christ bears him away, and he is *lost*, in endeavouring to save a soul from death, and to hide a multitude of sins. There is nothing with which a preacher should be less satisfied than a tame correctness, or his producing something that will bear criticism, but which is as void of excellency as it is free from defect. He that winneth souls is wise. What is every other praise of an instrument, if it does not answer its end? What is every other commendation of a preacher, if he be useless? unimpressive? uninteresting? What is it, that nothing is complained

of, if nothing is applauded? What is it, that nothing offends, if nothing strikes? What is the harangue that dies in the hearing, and leaves nothing for the hearers to carry away, to think of in solitude, and to speak of in company? What but a fault is the smoothness of address, that prevents every excitement that would rend by terror, or melt by tenderness? A sermon may resemble a French Drama that observes inviolably all the unities, and challenges severity as a finished piece: but excites no sentiment, and produces no effect. But give us rather a Shakspeare, who, with blemishes which a less shrewd observer than Voltaire may detect, actually succeeds, arrests, inspires, and enchants. We need not plead for coarseness or faults. A speaker may be animated, yet decorous and orderly too: but in popular addresses, if either fails, it is far better to sacrifice correctness to impression, than effect to nicety of endeavour. Let the squeamishly hypercritical remember that he is labouring to little purpose while consuming his time and attention in subtle accuracies, and polished dulness. And let the man who is in earnest about his work, never yield to an under anxiety resulting from the possibility of a trifling mistake; and which, as Gray says of penury, would repress his noble rage and chill the genial current of his soul. Let him feel his subject, and follow his ardour, recollecting that great excellencies or impressions will redeem small failures; and even prevent their being noticed—unless by the little and perverse-minded, who only sit to discover and remark any minute impropriety—adders to every thing else in the charmer, charm he never so wisely.

There is also some difference between the heat of delivery and the coolness of review; between the leasure and discrimination of readers and hearers. More freedom, therefore, will be permitted in preaching than in publishing: and what the press may forbid, the pulpit may tolerate. Yea, the pulpit may require it, especially for the sake of a large part of the congregation. For these, though they have not the advantage of culture, yet have souls as well as others, and their moral wants must be attended to. Now the preacher need not grovel down to the lowest level of the vulgar; yea, he should always take his aim a little above them, in order to raise and improve their taste: but he must not soar out of their sight and reach. He yet may be tempted to this by the presence of others. But let him remember, that those who are more educated and refined, ought, not only to

endure, but to commend his accommodation; yea, and they will commend, instead of censuring him, if they are really concerned for the welfare of their brethren less privileged than themselves. If they are benevolent and pious as well as intelligent, they will always be more pleased with a discourse suited to general comprehension and improvement, than with a preparation, which, in other circumstances, they might relish as an intellectual treat for themselves. To which we may add, that there is not so great a difference here as some mistaken and elaborate orators imagine. Genuine simplicity knows a mode, which, while it extends to the poor and unlearned, will equally please their superiors. For—

> "So it is when the mind is endued
> With a well-judging taste from above;
> *Then*, whether *embellished* or *rude*,
> 'Tis *nature* alone that we love.
>
> "The *achievements* of *art* may *amuse*,
> May even our *wonder* excite,
> But *groves*, *hills*, and *valleys* diffuse
> A *lasting*, a *sacred delight*."

In one of his charges, Archbishop Usher says to his clergy, "How much learning and wisdom, my brethren, are necessary to make these things plain!" Could any thing be more fine and judicious than this? Here is the proper direction and exertion of a minister's talents, whether natural or acquired. They are not to unfit him for any part of his office—which they may easily do, at the stimulation of vanity or pride; but to qualify and aid him the better to perform it. It is to be feared that some do not employ *their* abilities to make things plain—if they do, we can but lament their deplorable want of success. But it would seem as if their aim was to dazzle, rather than enlighten; to surprise, rather than inform; to raise admiration at their difficult compositon, rather than with the Apostles to use great plainness of speech. Even their claim to orignality often regards only the mode of representation. The ideas they wish to pass off as new, when examined, are found only common-place sentiments. The well is not really deep; but you cannot see to the bottom, because of their contrivance to make the water muddy. They are not really tall; and so they strain on tiptoe. They have not a native beauty that always appears to most advantage without finery; and so they would make up the

deficiency by excess, and complexity, and cumbersomeness of ornament. He who cannot rise in the simple grandeur of morning sun, can excite notice by the gaudy brilliancy of manufactured fireworks; and flame and sparkle down, as well as up. To notice in *some respects* a style that has been constructed (for it could hardly have been involuntary) so inverted, involved, obscure, difficult, half blank verse; might seem to be going out of the Author's province. He leaves, therefore, others to remark, that this style, though it may be extolled by the lower orders of professional men, and half-educated artisans, and exciteable youth, with a smattering of science and a bad taste; it will never obtain the approbation of the really judicious and discerning. He leaves others to remark, that it is disdained by scholars, and at war with classical purity. Lord Kaimes tells us that in every language, clearness of expression and simplicity of thought are the first marks of elegance. Milton observes, that nothing accords with true genius but what appears easy and natural when once it is produced. Agreeably to which, Addison says, that the sacret of fine writing is, for the sentiments to be natural, without being obvious; and contends, that what produces surprise without being simple, will never yield lasting pleasure to the mind. Hume, in his Essay on Refinement and Simplicity in Style, comes soon to this conclusion: that it is better to err in the *excess* of simplicity, than in the excess of refinement; the former extreme being more beautiful and less dangerous than the latter. He observes, that the works read again and again with so much pleasure, all lean more to the one side than to the other—that it is increasingly needful to be guarded against the extreme of refinement when learning has made much progress, and good writers appear in every species of composition: as men will then be the more tempted to endeavour to please by strangeness and novelty, and so fill their writings with affectation and conceits—and that simplicity may be lost, not only in subtlety, but in effort and straining; and nature and ease be buried under an artificial load of laborious diffusion.

But while the preacher leaves others to speak upon this subject as a literary question, it cannot be improper for him to notice it in another and far more important connexion; and to deprecate the adoption of such a style *in divinity*, and to warn his younger brethren against every approach and tendency towards it. For how perfectly is it unlike

the language of inspiration? What an entire contrast does it form with the simplicity there is in Christ Jesus! And how useless must such hard and unintelligible diction be to ordinary minds! And who are the mass in almost every audience?—They who are often comparatively neglected, if not despised, there. Leighton, and Watts, and a thousand other names, whose works praise them in the gate, and are now useful to *all*, might have so written as to be useless to *many*. Had our Saviour felt the low ambition of some, he might easily have been beyond the comprehension and the attraction of the multitude. In him were hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. He spake as never man spake. But was it a proof against his manner, or the highest recommendation of it, that the *common* people heard him gladly; and that *all* bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth? The author would not for the world be in the condition of that preacher whose attendants do not and cannot say, "Here the poor have the gospel preached unto them." They not only need it; and should excite our compassion by their temporal privations and sufferings, as well as by their spiritual condition; but they are capable of understanding, and receiving, and admiring it. Learning is not necessary here. The doctrines of the gospel are not the result of research, but testimony. There are funds of good sense and good feeling in the common people, as well as in others: and they are even capable of appreciating what is truly superior in preaching, if it be properly presented and *illustrated*. The fault is always much more with the preacher than with them. He does not adapt himself to those he professes to teach; he does not make them his aim; he does not study them; he does not throw himself into their modes and habits of thinking and feeling; he has nothing simple and natural in his official being. They understand and relish the Pilgrim's Progress; and the history of Joseph; and the parable of the lost sheep, and of the prodigal son. They are easily informed and impressed by the sayings of our Lord, and the language of the Scriptures. But nothing is to be done in *them* without excitement; and they are addressed without emotion. Their very understandings must be approached through their imaginations and passions; and they are lectured as if they had none. They are never to be starved into a surrender; and they are circumvallated and trenched at a distance. They are only to be taken by

an assault; and they are slowly and formally besieged. They want familiar and seasonable imagery; and to show the preacher's learning, they are furnished with allusions taken from the arts and sciences. They want striking sentences, and the words of the wise, which are as goads and as nails; and they have long and tame paragraphs. They only want truths to be brought home to their consciences, for they admit them already; and they are argued and reasoned into confusion or doubt. They want precedents; and are furnished with precepts. They want instances; and are deadened by discussions. They want facts; and are burdened with reflections.

The Bible adapts itself to the state of our nature: and knowing how little all are, and how little many *can* be affected with abstract representations of virtues and duties, it blends religion with history and biography; so that while we read the rule, we may see the exemplification; and be reproved, excited, and encouraged, while we are informed. It is not a series of logical definitions, like dead bodies well laid out and dressed—all is life and motion. It gives us actions rather than words. We view the fruits of righteousness growing on the tree. We have, not the pilgrimage, but the pilgrim; and go along with him from the city of destruction to the shining city. We are not spectators only; we are his companions: we are interested in all he meets with; we weep when he weeps, and rejoice when he rejoices. It is not Christianity that is set before us, but the Christian; and we attend him following his Saviour, denying himself, taking up his cross, resisting temptation, struggling with unwearied patience through a thousand difficulties, braving with fortitude every danger, and emerging out into glory, honour, and immortality. By nothing can the attention of children be so effectually caught as by facts and narratives: and "men are but children of a larger growth." What is the greater part of the Old Testament, but history? There is scarcely a Psalm, but refers to some fact in the experience of the composer. What are the prophets, but historians by anticipation? Many of them state various, past, and cotemporary events. The book of Jonah has only one prediction in it; but it describes in a most vivid and interesting manner the actual and wonderful occurrences that befel the bearer himself. How pleasing and striking are the short and simple annals of Ruth! What is the book of Job but the matchless dramatic story of a good man in his affluence, his

adversity, and deliverance? In the book of Genesis, we are present at the creation, the destruction, and the repeopling of the world; we live, we travel, we worship with the patriarchs: we stand round their dying beds. It is needless to add, that the remainder of the Pentateuch, with the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther, are all of the narrative kind, including general and individual sketches of the most wonderful people on earth. But what is the Gospel itself, according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John? Is it any thing like our treatises and bodies of divinity? It is the history of the Son of God: While the Acts are a portion of the history of the Apostles; and the Epistles are evermore enlivened with characters, incidents, and allusions. Is this the work of God? Does he know perfectly what is in man, and necessary to him? Has he herein abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence? Is it not then surprising that religious instructers should not think it necessary or desirable to resemble him? And can any thing be more unlike this inspired, and attractive, and irresistible, and impressive mode, than the structure of many of the discourses that are delivered in our public assemblies? Hence, they awaken so little attention; and yield so little pleasure; and take no firm hold on the mind and feelings, especially of the young and the common people—

"And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds."

General declamations and reflections do little in a popular audience. The preacher must enter into detail, and do much by circumstances. Nothing can penetrate, but what is pointed. Every indictment must particularize and specify. The eye may take in a large prospect, but we are affected by inspection. We must not stand long with our people on the brow of the hill, showing them a wide and indistinct expansion, but take them by the hand, and lead them down to certain spots and objects. We are to be characteristic—not only with regard to persons, though this is of great importance; but also with regard to vice and virtue, faults and excellencies. To what purpose is it to admonish servants to be good? The question is, in what is their goodness to appear? Therefore says the Apostle, "Exhort servants to be *obedient* to their own masters, and to *please them well* in all things; not *answering again;* not

purloining, but showing *all good fidelity*, that they may *adorn* the *doctrine* of God our Saviour in all things." Does Solomon only condemn drunkenness? What is there in the wretched crime; in its excitement, progress, evil, danger, misery, that he does not strike? "Who hath wo? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine, they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright: at the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things: yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast. They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not; when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again."

A preacher also must indulge in a certain degree of diffusiveness. He who passes rapidly from one thing to another is not likely to impress, or indeed even to inform the majority of his audience. To affect *them*, he must commonly dwell upon the thought a little; and sometimes more than a little; even with an enlargedness that may seem needless; and with a repetition in other words and exemplifications, that may go for tautology, with persons of quicker apprehensiveness. Hints will please the scholar, and set his own mind pleasingly in motion; and he can instantly add from his own stores. But many have nothing but what they receive. Besides, some are more struck with one species or instance of illustration and confirmation, and some with another: and he whose mind was wandering or heedless at first, may haply be seized afterward. For precept must be upon precept, line upon line; here a little, and there a little. And the preacher will often see by the look and manner of a hearer that what he failed to accomplish by a first stroke, has been done by a second.

The Author is perhaps furnishing materials with which to condemn himself. And let him be condemned, as far as he deviates from these rules; for he is fully persuaded of their goodness and truth. He can only say, it has long been his endeavour to conform to them. Upon the same principles he has acted with regard to a few other things, in which, if he has erred, he has erred from design.

Such is the large use he has made of Scripture language.

If holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, we should prefer the words the Holy Ghost useth. They are surely, on their own subjects, the most definite and significant. They are also well known: and it is a great advantage in addressing hearers that we are not perplexed with terms and phrases; but have those at hand which they understand—What a difficulty do we feel in dealing with those who are ignorant not only of the doctrine, but the letter, of the Scripture. It is probable that a very judicious critic and eloquent divine* would censure the author as in an extreme here: yet *he* seems to allow it to be an error on the safer side; and thinks that a great and original writer has condemned the copious use of Scripture language with too much severity. We avail ourselves of his striking remarks in his review of Mr. Foster's Essays. "To say nothing of the inimitable beauties of the Bible, considered in a literary view, which are universally acknowledged, it is the book which every devout man is accustomed to consult as the oracle of God; it is the companion of his best moments, and the vehicle of his strongest consolation. Intimately associated in his mind with every thing dear and valuable, its diction more powerfully excites devotional feelings than any other; and when temperately and soberly used, imparts an unction to a religious discourse, which nothing else can supply. Besides, is there not room to apprehend, that a studied avoidance of the Scripture phraseology, and a care to express all that it is supposed to contain in the forms of classical diction, might ultimately lead to neglect of the Scriptures themselves, and a habit of substituting flashy and superficial declamation, in the room of the saving truths of the gospel? Such an apprehension is but too much verified by the most celebrated sermons of the French; and still more by some modern compositions in our own language, which usurp that title. For devotional impression, we conceive that a very considerable tincture of the language of Scripture, or at least such a colouring as shall discover an intimate acquaintance with those inimitable models, will generally succeed best."

If it be allowed from all these considerations, that the language of the Bible has such claims, will it not follow that the frequent use of it will tend to bring the preacher's own language into some degree of keeping with it? Surely

* Mr. Hall.

that style is best for religious instruction which most easily and congenially incorporates the composition of the Bible with it. This is not the case with some modes of writing and speaking. But if there be unsuitableness, and difficulty, and discordancy, in the junction, which is to blame? and which requires to be altered in order to their readier coalescence? the language of the Scripture, or our own? Knox has affirmed, that no writer or speaker will ever be so tender, and pathetic, and touching, as he whose diction is most imbued with the manner and phraseology of the sacred authors.

It will be perceived that the Lecturer has not unfrequently made use also of the language of poetry. This is sometimes condemned: but a sentence of this kind will often relieve, and often revive the attention; while it serves to fix a sentiment more firmly in the memory. And is it not in this very way that God has addressed men? How much of the Bible is poetical! How curiously constructed are some of its divisions! In one case a whole Psalm is divided into as many sections as there are letters in the Hebrew alphabet: every division contains an equal number of verses; and each verse begins with the same letter. "I," says inspired Wisdom, "dwell with *prudence*, and find out knowledge of witty inventions." And will a man inquire—not whether an usage accords with God's condescension, and is likely to be useful, especially to the middle and lower classes—but whether, after a poetical quotation, his style will not seem to sink; or whether the thing be sanctioned by any first-rate authority—and this too—this weighing of trifles; while he is doing the work of eternity, and has souls perishing in view! Paul knew the end would not sanctify sinful means; but he knew it justified the use of any lawful ones; and therefore, with a nobleness of mind that raises him infinitely above the intellectually proud and unaccommodating, he could say, "Though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. Unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.

And this I do for the Gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you."

In the following documents, some things may be found looking rather inconsistent with each other. This arises from a wish the Author felt strongly to represent and recommend—whatever it was—the *present* subject. And he is greatly mistaken if this be not the method of the sacred writers. They never seem afraid of expressing themselves too forcibly at the time. They never stop to qualify the things they are delivering. There *are* qualifications to be found; but these are brought forward in other places, and where they are themselves the subjects enforced. Our Saviour makes no limitations or exceptions, when he is enjoining confidence in the care and providence of God—"Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?—Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." But the same authority says elsewhere—"Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest." "How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?" "Let thine eyes look right on, and thine eyelids straight before thee." "He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand; but the hand of the diligent maketh rich." He must be a spiritless teacher who never produces the surprise of paradox; who never alarms the timid and cautious; and whose strength of statement and urgency, does not furnish some seeming contradictions.

The Author is not sure the same thought, or expression, may not occur more than once in these Lectures; or that he may not have used them before in some of his other publications: for writers are often the least acquainted with their own works; being afraid to read them, lest they should discover faults too late for correction, and be only rendered miserable by the discovery. Should this be the case, it is not only hoped that they may be excused on the ground of inadvertence; but also that they may prove not wholly unuseful, being found in different connections, and applied to different purposes.

The subjects were common-place in themselves; and could

be only rendered novel in any degree by their order and treatment. They were also very extensive subjects, and the difficulty of the preacher arose from the necessity of selection and concentration. He was obliged to reject much that offered, and to confine himself in each instance to two or three views. These ought to have been the most leading, and comprehensive, and profitable. But here the Author can only be answerable for intentions and endeavours.

To conclude. No thought was entertained of any thing more than the delivery of these Lectures from the pulpit till many of them were preached. They were therefore only distinguishable from his ordinary public addresses by their length. Into this he was led by a wish to do some justice to the subject without a second discourse upon the same topic, which always divides and impairs the impression. Till a desire began to be expressed for their publication, he had only short notes from which they could be written out. But he then began to secure them, especially by hints and mementos after preaching: and he is persuaded his friends will find the Lectures more than substantially the same they heard with so much candour and acceptance. They will also observe, that he has secured as far as possible even the style in which they were delivered.

One thing will be perceived in each of the discourses. He has largely treated the subject in a way of application. He did not intend to hold up the Christian to barren contemplation. His aim was to make his hearers fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of the promise of Christ by the Gospel.

> Behold the awful portrait, and admire,
> Nor stop at wonder: imitate and live.

WILLIAM JAY.

Percy Place, Sept. 10th, 1826.

LECTURE I.

THE CHRISTIAN, IN CHRIST.

"*I knew a man in Christ.*"—2 Cor. xiv. 2.

> "A Christian is the highest style of man;
> And is there, who the Cross wipes off,
> As a foul blot, from his dishonoured brow?
> If angels tremble, 'tis at such a sight."

So sings, with his accustomed energy and excellence, our admired Young. It is not, however, with the poetry of this passage we now have to do, but with the sentiment contained in it.

Yes; "A Christian *is* the highest style of man." Inspiration itself pronounces him to be "more excellent than his neighbour," however that neighbour may be distinguished. Who, on a fair trial, can bear a comparison with him?—The rich? But he has "the true riches;" durable riches, with righteousness; "the unsearchable riches of Christ."—The honourable? But he is "great in the sight of the Lord;" he has "the honour that cometh from God only."—The learned? But he is made "wise unto salvation;" he has "an unction from the Holy One, and knoweth all things."—The sons of heroism? But, "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his own spirit than he that taketh a city." He subdues enemies that vanquish all other victors: he is more than a conqueror; and the Captain of his salvation thus eulogizes and rewards him: "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out; and I will write upon him the name of my God; and the name of the city of my God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God, and I will write upon him my new name."

It was a high encomium our Saviour pronounced on his forerunner: "Among them that are born of women, there

hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist." But observe the addition: yet "he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." Even Adam, in his original state, was nothing to a Christian. Redemption delivers us from far greater evils than creation: the one rescues us only from non-existence; the other, from sin, and death, and hell. The blessings of grace are far superior to those of nature. What was the garden of Eden to "the new heaven and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness?" What was the tree of life to him, the true source of immortality, who came, "not only that we might have life, but have it more abundantly?" We were made by an exertion of wisdom and power; but we are saved by the "manifold wisdom of God;" and by "the exceeding greatness of his power, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places."

When therefore a man, ashamed of such an infinite distinction, endeavours to free himself from the imputation as a reproach, it *is* credible, "that if angels tremble, 'tis at such a sight." For however deluded *we* are, *they* judge of things according to their real value and importance. The world may shout at a victory that has slain its thousands, and filled domestic life with "the fatherless and the widows;" but "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Men may disesteem and neglect "the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow;" but "the angels desire to look into these things." Christ crucified was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but John "heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying, with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

Your preacher, therefore, is more than justified in a plan, the design of which he has already intimated, and which he now proceeds to lay before you. It is to hold up the CHRISTIAN to your view, in some very important and comprehensive conditions and relations. To this design, we dedicate Twelve Lectures.

The First will lead you to contemplate the Christian in CHRIST.

The Second, in the CLOSET.
The Third, in the FAMILY.
The Fourth, in the CHURCH.
The Fifth, in the WORLD.
The Sixth, in PROSPERITY.
The Seventh, in ADVERSITY.
The Eighth, in his SPIRITUAL SORROWS.
The Ninth, in his SPIRITUAL JOYS.
The Tenth, in DEATH.
The Eleventh, in the GRAVE.
The Twelfth, in GLORY.

"Consider what I say, and the Lord give you understanding in all things."

We are this morning to behold the Christian,

IN CHRIST.

If this Lecture is more general than the remaining ones, let it be remembered that it is fundamental to the whole series; and with the subject of it, all in religion begins. Every thing in your Christian character is derived from Christ. You cannot *be* a Christian unless you are *in* him.

Of this state the Apostle here speaks. "I knew a man," says he, "in Christ." The mode of expression is humble and modest; but by this "man," he unquestionably intends himself. We all have known some in Christ; and this should awaken our joy and praise. But religion is a personal thing. We cannot be saved by the grace of others. Yet *their* experience should encourage and induce *us* to apply to the same source. For they were once destitute; and He who enriched them is able to supply us, and, blessed be his name, is equally willing. He even *intends* that every instance of his mercy should be a plea against despair: hence the "man" before us could say, "Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering for a pattern to them that should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting."

To come nearer our subject. There are three states mentioned in the Scripture with regard to Christ.

The first is to be *without* Christ. "At that time," says the Apostle, to the Ephesians, "ye were without Christ." This is true of the heathen, and it is true of all those who are living in sin, even in a land of vision. "The light

shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not." This is the state of nature.

The second is to be *with* Christ. "I long," says Paul, "to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better." "And so," says he, "shall we be for ever with the Lord." This is the state of glory.

The third is to be *in* Christ. This is the state of grace. I need not remark how frequently the Scripture speaks of this condition. Let us reduce its declarations to some easy and brief arrangement. Of this state let us consider,

I. The NATURE.
II. The IMPORTANCE.
III. The EVIDENCE.

I. The NATURE.—What is it to be *in* Christ? It is to be a Christian. Paul, speaking of certain individuals, says, "who were in Christ before me:" that is, they embraced Christianity before he did. "The churches," says he, "which are in Christ:" that is, Christian churches, in distinction from Heathen and Jewish. "Salute," says he, "Appelles approved in Christ:" that is, an approved Christian.

It is needless to multiply examples, as the thing is undeniable. But admitting the fact, there must be some reason, and some very powerful reason, not only for the frequency of the expression, but for the expression itself. The language is perfectly peculiar. There are indeed various relations and connections in life; and some of our fellow-creatures are much attached to others, and very dependent upon them; yet we never say, a patient is *in* his physician; or, a servant *in* his master; or, a disciple *in* his teacher. But we constantly read of our being *in* Christ—and, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." New terms imperceptibly make way for new doctrines; nor has any subtlety of the enemy of souls succeeded better in corrupting the mind from the simplicity there is in Christ, than modernizing the language of divinity. When men are shy of the "words the Holy Ghost teacheth," we are always afraid they are beginning to be ashamed of the things.

The expression means a state of union with Christ. This union may be considered as visible and professional; or real and vital. This is not a distinction without a difference:

there is a foundation for it, in reason; and it is even necessary, to harmonize the testimonies of divine truth. Thus our Saviour says, "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." Thus a man may be in him, and be *fruitless;* and be in him, and *perish.* But can either of these be true, when applied to those who are Christians indeed, and of whom, by a change of metaphor, it is said, "I will put my Spirit within them, and cause them to walk in my statutes, and to keep my judgments and do them?" and, "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand?" We therefore must admit, that a person may be in him by profession, when he is not in him in reality: in him, by a form of godliness, while he denies the power thereof; in him, by an external alliance with his church, and by the use of his ordinances, while he is a stranger to the renewing of the Holy Ghost, and the grace of God in truth. As religion ceases to be persecuted, and becomes respectable, such pretensions will be frequent; and they may for awhile impose upon men, and even good men: but God is not mocked—and what is the hope of the hypocrite though he hath gained, when God casteth away his soul?

But there is another union with Christ: and *this* union is not only real and vital, but the most intimate, and entire, and indissoluble; independent of the changes of time, unaffected by the diseases of the body, uninjured by death, untouched by the destructions of the last day.

Let us look at it.—But how shall we do this? Here the sacred writers lead the way; and were we like-minded with them, our senses would minister to our faith, and every thing would admonish us of the Lord of all. The sun would tell us, that there is another orb above him, "with healing under his wings." The wind would remind us that "so is every one that is born of the Spirit." We should think of Christ, and of Christians as one with him, whenever we saw a foundation and a building; a fountain and a stream; a shepherd and his sheep; a king and his subjects; an advocate and his client. None of these indeed can do justice to the subject; the subject being so peculiar in its nature, and so boundless in its extent. The sacred writers feel this, and therefore, to increase their efficiency, they throw

off from the images they employ every imperfection in their kind; they add to them attributes which are not naturally inherent in them; and they multiply their number, that they may accomplish by combination what could not be done by individuality: and thus, though these allusions fall short of the glory they are applied to illustrate, they aid our meditations. With many of these we are furnished in the Scripture. Let us glance at a few of them; and let us be thankful that instead of their having any thing novel in them, they are well known and familiar.

We are in Christ as we are in Adam. "In Adam all die: so in Christ shall all be made alive." From the first we derive our natural being, and from the second our spiritual. By the one we fell, by the other we rise again. By the disobedience of one many were made sinners, and by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. From the one, sin reigned unto death; by the other, grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life. "The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly: and as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

It is commonly supposed that the ark was designed to be a type of Christ: but if we cannot prove this, it certainly affords a striking image of him. A deluge was coming on, and Noah and his family were exposed to the flood as well as others. But they escaped uninjured; for they availed themselves of the shelter provided. They entered it in time, and the Lord shut them in; and they could not have been safer had they been in heaven. Not a drop of the torrents from above, or of the deep below, touched them; and through the universal wreck they sailed out into fair weather and into a new world. But there was no other mode of deliverance. Swimming was useless; a boat was a vain thing for safety; and truly in vain was salvation hoped for from the hills and the multitude of mountains. All were overwhelmed that contemned the Divine appointment; for though there were abysses of destruction every where, there was only one ark. "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name given under heaven among men whereby they must be saved," than the name of Jesus. "I am," says he, "the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me."

A peculiar provision under the law was also an emblem of our subject. The man committing casual murder was exposed to the avenger of blood, who had a right to kill him wherever he should be found, unless in one of the cities of refuge. The place of immunity was situated on an eminence, to be visible from afar. The road to it was open, and wide, and prepared; and when there was any danger of mistake, a direction pointed, "Refuge, Refuge." To this, therefore, the offender, incapable of trifling or tarrying, fled for his life; and it is easy to imagine what were his feelings, his anxiety, his anguish, till he had entered the asylum; and the calm and confidence he enjoyed as soon as he could turn and face the foe, and say, "Thou canst not touch me here." To this, the Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, who would well understand the allusion, refers, when he speaks of those "who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before them."

Christians are in Christ as the branches are in the tree. It matters not how near a branch is to a tree—yea, if it lean against it; yea, if it be corded to it, or even nailed, it can neither flourish or live, unless it be in the stock. But when it is in the tree, the very same sap that pervades the one, flows into the other, and sustains and fertilizes it. And says our Saviour, "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me; for *without* me ye can do nothing."

And to mention nothing more—They are in Christ as the members of the human body are in the head. For he is called "the head of his body the Church:" and believers are said to be "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." They are real and living parts of him. As the head governs and directs the body, they are under his guidance and authority: and as the body is actuated by the head, and depends upon ligatures with it, and influences from it, so they live by him; and of his fulness they all receive, and grace for grace.—Let us,

II. Consider the IMPORTANCE of this state.

We often, in determining the worth of a thing, *appeal to authority:* and we are much influenced in our decision by the competency of the judge. Here it must be confessed the multitude are not a safe guide, nor yet many of those who by their rank and attainments may seem entitled to

take the lead in society. They rise early and sit up late, and eat the bread of sorrow, and deny themselves, and compass sea and land, for fortune and for fame. But their urgency in the things of time and sense, forms a deplorable contrast with their insensibility and negligence with regard to the things that belong to their everlasting peace. So that were we to estimate the value of the prize by the zeal of the candidates, we could not deem it worth a moment's thought. But we do not appeal to the blind and the deaf in questions of colour and of sound. How can the votaries of the god of this world appreciate a kingdom that is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost? "The world knew him not" when on earth: and it is not wiser now. But the spiritual judgeth all things, though he himself is judged of no man. Let us turn to Paul. Paul was a man of learning and wisdom. He had been the greatest enemy to the cause of the Gospel, and had, from the most irresistible and perfect conviction, become its adherent and advocate. He was not a novice in experience, but had been for many years acquainted with the Saviour, studying him as a minister, as well as believing in him as a Christian, when he wrote to the Philippians. Yet what was his language? "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found IN HIM." Thus *he* was fully persuaded that a union with Christ was a state infinitely desirable; and that his estimation was well founded will appear—

If we survey the state *in connection with the advantages inseparable from it, but never to be enjoyed without it.* And here I must make a selection; for I find myself in a garden abounding with productions, all of which I wish to commend; but I have only time to lead you to notice a *few* of the flowers and the fruits; and in doing this, order is not necessary.

But is it desirable to be delivered from captivity and bondage—a bondage the most degrading; a captivity the most oppressive? Here you enjoy it. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins."

Is it desirable to be safe from condemnation? Condemnation is to be judged of by the doom to which it consigns us.

Now "Cursed is he that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." And who can appreciate the misery of this curse? Who knoweth the power of his anger? It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. But "there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." That is, none that will affect their security. Conscience may condemn; the world may condemn; Satan, the accuser of the brethren, may condemn; but these are not the Judge. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is *God* that justifieth. *Who* is he that condemneth? It is *Christ* that died; yea, rather, that is risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

Is acceptance with God desirable? Here we have it—"This," says God, "is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The complacency extends to us, as well as to himself. "Thou hast loved them," says the Saviour, "as thou hast loved me." He hath made us accepted in the Beloved: and this is true both of our persons and our services. "He gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour;" and we could not have been originally so dear to God as we now become, through his mediation.

Tell me, ye who delight in communion with God, and are so often constrained to repair to him for mercy and grace to help in time of need, is it good to draw nigh to God? And can you go to him freely as your Father, at all seasons, on all occasions; and in every thing by prayer and supplication make known your requests unto God, with an assurance of success? "In whom we have boldness and access with confidence, by the faith of him."

In him we have all our supplies and endowments. "We are complete in him." Where can I find righteousness? In vain I look even to my duties and to my holy things. These are all defective and polluted; and if they *deserve* any thing, it is condemnation: and if he *thus* enters into judgment with us, no flesh living can be justified. But Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. Thus I appear before him "not having my own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is of faith:" and this not only justifies me from all things, but gives me a title to eternal life.—And where but in him can I find strength? The journey I have to take, the race I have to run, the warfare I have to accomplish, the duties I

have to perform, the trials I have to bear; all these are not only above my natural powers, but even above the grace I possess, without fresh and constant supplies of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. But he cries, "*My* grace is sufficient for thee, for *my* strength is made perfect in weakness." Surely therefore shall one say, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength."

Where shall we end? "If children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." But *he* is heir of all things; therefore, says the Apostle, "All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." You are united to him, and he is united to God. You are in him, and he is in God. How secure, then, is the happiness of believers! Their life is hid with Christ in God! How incapable of rupture is the connection between them and God, unless the medium that unites them can fail! But "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

We may also view the importance of this state *in connection with certain seasons when it must be peculiarly felt.* There are four of these.

The first is the hour of *conviction.* What is the reason that many of you read and hear of this state with such indifference, that you make light of the invitation to enter it, and go your way, one to his farm and another to his merchandise? You do not feel yourselves in the wretchedness and jeopardy it implies and is designed to relieve. One question forced from a wounded spirit—"What must I do to be saved?" would magnify this state more than all the arguments your preachers can ever employ. When a man is awakened to serious consideration; when he examines his character and condition; when he looks and sees what he is, what he wants, what he deserves; when he perceives the vastness and certainty of his danger; when he finds himself perfectly unable to effect his own deliverance, and knows also that the help of men and angels united could not reach the desperateness of his case, then how inexpressibly desirable appears a connection with Him who is able to save to the uttermost! who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification! in whom it

hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell! Then how delightful to hear him say, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest!" Then how blessed, by believing, to enter into rest, and "joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom he has now received the atonement!"

The second is the day of *trouble*. And this may always be expected; for man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards. And what, in the wreck of property, in the loss of relations and friends, in the failure of health and comfort—what will you do without "the consolation of Israel?" While your cisterns are broken, the fountain of living water is far off; while your lamps are extinguished, no Sun of Righteousness rises with healing under his wings. But if you had an interest in him who is the hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in the time of trouble, your trials would all be sanctified and alleviated; at what time you were afraid, you would trust in him; in the multitude of your thoughts within you, his comforts would delight your soul. "I am cast down, but not destroyed. I feel my losses, but *I* am not lost. The waters are bitter, but this tree heals them. The cross takes away the curse; yea, turns the curse into a blessing. It is good for me that I am afflicted. I know this shall turn to my salvation, through prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ."

The third is an hour that awaits you all. The day of trouble may come—the hour of *death* must come. The one is probable, the other is absolutely certain. For what man is he that liveth and shall not see death? The living know that they shall die. But though death be a universal event, it is not a universal privilege. It would be the most dreadful delusion in many of you to say, "It is better for me to die than to live;" for however severe your present sufferings may be, they are only the beginning of sorrows. If death finds you out of Christ, it would have been good for you if you had never been born. There will be nothing to screen you from the power with which it is armed by sin. It will deprive you of all you hold most dear; it will terminate your space for repentance; it will close all your opportunities of mercy; it will put a seal upon your character and condition for ever: it will arrest, and deliver you to the judge, and the judge will deliver you to the officer, and you will be cast into prison, and you shall not come out thence till you have paid the uttermost farthing. But hear

the voice from heaven: "Blessed are the dead that die *in the Lord.*" He in whom they are found, has abolished death, by the final destruction of the state, and the present removal of the sting; by the change of its nature and office; by turning it into a departure, a sleep; by making it gain. If death finds you in Christ, it will be the angel of the covenant; it will wipe away all your tears; it will lead you to the altar of God, to God your exceeding joy.

You may continue to neglect and despise the Friend of sinners *now*, but you will have other thoughts soon. Death will discover and display the errors of life. How will you then wonder that the trifles and vanities which now engross you, should ever have acquired such an ascendancy! How will you be amazed that you constantly disregarded him who alone can befriend you when all other helpers fail! *Then* you will learn, but in vain, that an interest in Christ is the one thing needful. Cannot you look forward? Cannot you foresee this, before the knowledge can result only in despair?

For, fourthly, There is another day, and from which the former derives its greatest dread—it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the *judgment.* I do not ask you what are your thoughts now?—but what will they be, when the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? when all that are in their graves shall come forth? when the dead, small and great, shall stand before God, and the books shall be opened? What will you then do without a friend, an advocate? Then the tribes of the earth will mourn and wail because of him. Then they who have despised him, and rejected him, will cry to the rocks and mountains to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb. But the believer in Jesus lifts up his head with joy, for his redemption draweth nigh. Here he looked for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life, and now he enjoys it. He is found *in* him, and therefore he is found *of* him in peace—and hears him say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." To which we may add, that all this admits of anticipation by faith; and now, even *now*, he can say—"I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day."

But all that renders the state important pleads in favour of inquiry and decision.—Let us, therefore,

III. Consider the EVIDENCE of our being in Christ.

There is no doubt but it is very desirable to know this; and it would be strange to suppose that it is impossible to ascertain it; especially since we are not only required to examine ourselves, and prove whether we are in the faith, but also to rejoice in the Lord always. Paul, we see, was assured of this—"I knew a man in Christ:" and he knew himself to be so, not as he was an Apostle, (for a man might have been an Apostle, and not in Christ—this was the case with Judas,) but as a believer. Official service is very distinguishable from personal experience, and gifts do not pledge the existence of grace. John does not say, we know that we have passed from death to life because we can prophesy or speak with new tongues, but "because we love the brethren."

When, however, we speak of this confidence, a little explanatory caution may be necessary. People often call it the full assurance of faith. This is indeed a scriptural expression, but it occurs only once; and then it is used to denote, not a certainty of appropriation and experience, but a full persuasion of our being allowed, by the new and living way which he has consecrated, to enter the presence of God in prayer, and partake of all the blessings of his salvation. There is, therefore, an expression we prefer to this—it is "the full assurance of hope." Our present confidence is the confidence of hope, and of hope only. This hope may be considered in a state of conflict with doubts and fears; or in a state of victory and triumph over them: in the one case, there will be anxiety and uneasiness, and in the other, joy and repose; but the degree does not alter the nature of the thing itself.

On what, then, is this confidence founded? Dreams? Visions? Voices in the air? Sudden impulses? Passages or promises accidentally presented on opening the Bible? and applied, regardless of the connection from which they are taken, or the characters of those by whom they are adopted? On what strange, what dubious, what unauthorized evidences, do some rest their eternal hope! "To the law and to the testimony. If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

All the errors, however, in judging ourselves, are not on one side. There are mistakes also on the right hand: and though they are not dangerous like those on the left, they may be distressing and even injurious, and therefore we must guard against them.

In deciding your condition, you should not make the experience of others too much the standard of your judgment; for though, as in water, face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man, yet, along with a general conformity, there is frequently much difference, especially in the degree and duration of those spiritual exercises which commonly precede the joy of God's salvation, and attend the part of divine doctrine that first seizes our attention.

Neither should you be too minute in your inquiries. The blind man, who was not able to answer every question pertaining to his case, could yet say, "One thing I know: whereas I was blind, now I see." A man may be sure of his natural life, though he knows not when it commenced; and he actually possessed the boon, long before *he* was able to prove it to himself, though he always evinced it to others. What we have to look after should be influences and effects; and these may be undeniable, without the knowledge of the time, the means, and the manner of their production. A slow and gradual operation is less striking than a sudden and instantaneous; but the increase of the corn sown is as real, and as divine too, as the multiplication of the barley loaves in the Gospel.

When we are deciding our Christian state, we should not try ourselves by attainments. The reality of divine grace is one thing; the degree is another. We may be of the same species with a fellow-creature, though not of the same stature: and though not equally advancing, we may be in the same way. This I know is liable to some abuse; and we are always afraid, when we thus speak, lest people should avail themselves of it, "to settle," as the Scripture has it, "upon their lees;" or, in other words, to be content with a hope of their safety, while they are careless of religious progression. Thus it is said, Cromwell having asked a minister, "What was the lowest evidence of regeneration," said, on receiving an answer, "Then I am safe." And yet there are moments of gloom and depression, in which the question must be—not have I much grace? but have I any? When the house is on fire, the tradesman does not think of taking stock; his only concern *then* is to save.

It is a good evidence in your favour, if you *value the thing;* and while the multitude ask, "Who will show us *any* good?" can say—*One* good only can serve my purpose; and the language of the Apostle, and of the martyr, is not too strong for me—"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death:" "None but Christ, none but Christ!" "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled."

It is a token for good, when you *feel much concern and anxiety about this state.* It has been said, that it is easy to believe what we wish; but, Paley remarks, that the experience of every man gives the lie to this maxim. We all know, that in proportion as we attach moment to a thing, and find our happiness involved in it, we find it hard to persuade ourselves that we have a firm hold of it; we are alive and awake to every supposition of uncertainty: we still want proof and confirmation. Does the miser feel it easy to believe that his money, the god of his idolatry, is safe? A mother hears that the vessel is wrecked on a foreign shore, but that her son is rescued from the deep. There is nothing in the world she so much desires to be true; yet is it easy for her to banish her solicitude and doubt? She will peruse every document, and examine every witness; and scarcely be able to think he is living till she presses him in her arms. Now we may reason from the less to the greater. A man who feels the infinite importance attached to the soul and eternity, will always find it difficult to consider himself a child of God, and an heir of glory; and will never cease saying, "Give me a token for good, that I may rejoice in thee. Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation." Smoke is not fire, yet there is no smoke where there is no fire—doubts and fears are not faith, but they are gendered by it.

They who are united to Christ are characterised by the *change* which they have experienced. This change is not only real, but entire—entire, not in the degree, but extent. It is complete in nothing; but it is begun in all the Christian's views, and sentiments, and dispositions, and dependence, and taste, and motives, and pursuits. Hence, says the Apostle, "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

They are also distinguished by *the principle which governs*

them. Hence we read, "They that are in Christ Jesus, walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." The former will excite as well as the latter; but they do not yield to it: and his servants ye are, to whom ye obey. The one is opposed, the other is encouraged. The one enters into the mind by fraud or force like a robber, producing alarm and misery, and allowing of no peace till he is expelled. The other is invited; and when he comes is welcomed and entertained as a friend. "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of God, he is none of his."

And this leads us to remark, that all they who are in him *resemble* him. "He that saith he dwelleth in him, ought himself also to walk even as he walked." Not only gratitude and consistency require this, but evidence. "If," says the holy Saviour, "I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." There must be likeness, in order to fellowship. "For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness, and what communion hath light with darkness? Or what concord hath Christ with Belial?" Christ and Christians are, not like Nebuchadnezzar's statue: the head of which was of gold, while the subordinate parts were of inferior metal, down to the feet which were partly iron and partly clay. "He that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one." He is a partaker of their nature; and they are the partakers of his. They are not of the world even as he is not of the world. They have the same mind which was also in Christ Jesus: a sameness of sentiment and feeling; a oneness of heart and of soul—"he that is joined to the Lord, is one spirit."

Men and Brethren—Are you in Christ?

Perhaps you have never yet asked yourselves this question. You have been careful of your property; and every legal doubt has led you to call in the lawyer. You have been anxious for your character, and every whisper of

slander has led you to vindicate your reputation. You have been all alive to your health, and every symptom of disease has instantly led you to consult the physician. But to this very hour—and you know it—to this very hour—never once in your lives have you retired, and seriously asked yourselves—Am I in Christ? And yet you acknowledge that your eternal happiness depends upon it—and that this life is your only opportunity—and that this season is not only short, but uncertain—and that "in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh!" Yet you call yourselves rational creatures! Yet you allow that a "prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on, and are punished!"

My dear hearers. You admire one and another of your fellow creatures, and think how happy you should feel if you could make their advantages your own. And what are these advantages? Are they not things that perish in the using? that afford no satisfaction in the enjoyment? that profit not in the day of wrath? that cannot deliver from death? And are *these* the things for which you envy men of the world, who have their portion in this life? Is it not time, especially for some of you, to grow wiser, and to form your estimates by the judgment of God, which is always according to truth? "Search the Scriptures." There you will find that they, and they alone, are wise, and safe, and happy, who can say, to "the praise of the glory of his grace," "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true: and we are in him that is true; even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." Envy these, not by grudging them their blessedness, but by longing for a participation of it; and praying with one, who though a king himself, yet overlooking all his earthly advantages, kneeled and said, "Remember me, O Lord, with the favour thou bearest unto thy people: oh visit me with thy salvation, that I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, and glory with thine inheritance."

Let this be your concern—let it be your *supreme* concern—"Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God, and his righteousness."—And let it be your *immediate* concern. You cannot be happy too soon: and while you hesitate, and linger, the opportunity may be irrecoverably lost. "Seek the Lord

while he may be found; call upon him while he is near." And for your encouragement, be persuaded that you will not, cannot seek him in vain. All things are now ready. Rise, he calleth thee—and says, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out."

How ought we to conduct ourselves towards those that are in Christ? Surely if they have little of earthly distinction, they should be judged of by their treasure in heaven. Whatever they are in themselves, their destination, their rank, their *relation* should ensure them respect. They are to be valued for *his* sake with whom they are one; and *shall* be one for ever. In consequence of this union, if we slight and injure them, *he* feels it as if done to himself: "He that touches them, touches the apple of his eye." In the same way, he regards our attentions and kindnesses to them, as if they were favours conferred upon himself: "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me."

Finally. How ought they that are in Christ to conduct *themselves?* How cheerfully, how gratefully ought you to feel! Once far off, and now nigh! Once strangers and enemies, and now fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God! Once having nothing, now possessing all things! You have had much forgiven—you should love much. He has done great things for you—you should largely inquire, what can you do for him; and, "by the mercies of God, present your body a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable, which is your reasonable service." O you, who live by this Saviour, make him known. Recommend him. Begin with your own family. You are concerned to provide for your children. But how is your love operating? Is it not in laying up for them treasure on earth? or seeking great things for them in the world? It would be infinitely better to leave them in Christ, than to leave them with thousands of gold and silver, or with kings upon the throne. Forget not your friends, and your neighbours. Hold forth the Word of Life impressively and invitingly to all around you. Teach transgressors his ways, and let sinners be converted unto him. What says the Poet?

> "O 'tis a Godlike privilege to save:
> And he that scorns it is himself a slave.
> Inform the mind: one beam of heavenly day
> Will heal the heart, and melt his chains away."

What says the Apostle? "If a man err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his ways, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." Amen.

LECTURE II.

THE CHRISTIAN, IN THE CLOSET.

"*Enter into thy closet.*"—Matt. vi. 6.

The curiosity and attention of men are awakened by very different excitements, according to their temper, and education, and habits in life; and what is despised by some as worthless, is studied by others with peculiar delight.

But there is really a gradation in the value of objects themselves. The works of art display great skill and ingenuity; but the productions of nature are much more deserving of our inspection: witness the remark of our Saviour concerning the lilies of the field—"Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." But the operations of grace far surpass the results of nature; for they regard the soul and eternity, and display more of the perfections of deity. Therefore, says David, "Thou has magnified thy word above all thy name." Therefore He himself says, "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind."

The subjects of divine grace, therefore, are the most interesting characters in our world. Many indeed neglect and despise them; but there is one class of persons, always dear to a minister of Christ, who feel them the most powerfully attractive. They are those, who, roused to a sense of their danger, are exclaiming, "What must I do to be saved?"—who, longing to return to him from whom they have revolted, are inquiring, "How shall I come before the Lord, and bow before the high God?"—who, bound for the glory to be revealed, are "asking the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward." If you were going a journey of great difficulty, and yet of unspeakable importance; and you were in company with a multitude of individuals, *he* amongst them all, who had travelled the road himself,

would be the man of your preference; and you would endeavour to get near, and converse with *him*. To a suffering patient, the most engaging person he could meet with, next to the physician—for none would bear a comparison with him—would be the man who had himself laboured under the same complaint, and could tell of the manner in which the remedy is applied; and whose own recovery would be a living voucher not only of its safety, but of its efficacy and success.

In a series of discourses, to bring the CHRISTIAN before you, for your admiring and practical contemplation, last Lord's day we viewed him IN CHRIST: We are this morning to consider him—

In the CLOSET.

Wonder not, my brethren, that we bring forward this view of the Christian, so *early*. By this he is distinguished from the commencement of his religious concern. He soon turns aside from the vile and the vain, and bewails himself alone. *They* cannot enter into his feelings *now*. They know nothing of a broken heart and a contrite spirit, unless as a subject of wonder or contempt. He feels his sin to be a burden too heavy for him to bear, and longs for ease; but the "wide world" cannot relieve him, cannot sympathise with him, cannot direct him to "the rest and the refreshing." All great sorrow seeks solitude and silence: "He sitteth alone, and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him; he putteth his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope." Did ever language describe the experience of the penitent so beautifully, so feelingly as the words of our heavenly bard?

> "I was a stricken deer, that left the herd
> Long since: with many an arrow deep infix'd
> My panting side was charged, when I withdrew
> To seek a tranquil death in distant shades.
> There was I found by one, who had himself
> Been hurt by the archers. In his side he bore,
> And in his hands and feet, the cruel scars.
> With gentle force soliciting the darts,
> He drew them forth, and healed, and bade me live.
> Since then—
> With few associates, and not wishing more,
> Here much I ruminate, as much I may,

With other views of men and manners now
Than once; and others of a life to come."

Yes, his chief business *now* is with God; and this is not to be managed in a crowd: and as this business continues and increases through life, abstraction and retirement will always be desirable, always necessary. His religion cannot flourish—cannot live without it.

Our theme is very extensive. Let us detach from it four things. Let us review the Christian in his retirement, with regard

I. To Place.
II. Time.
III. Engagement.
IV. Motives.

I. With regard to Place.

Our Saviour says, "Enter into thy *closet*." The word signifies any retired apartment; and some imagine that he employs a term of such latitude, that we might have no excuse for omission, if we are unfurnished with a place appropriated more expressly to pious use.

The connection requires this extension of meaning. Our Lord applies the word "closet" obviously in opposition to the "corner of the street;" and in distinction from the openness of the "synagogue," where persons could be "seen of men," and for which purpose these situations were chosen by the Pharisees. But *he* would have his disciples to avoid all appearance of ostentation; and perform their devotions where they would be concealed, unless from a witness in heaven. Yet if the end, which is privacy, can be answered, the place would be indifferent.

"*Where'er* we seek Him, he is found;
And *every* place is holy ground."

"I will that men pray *every where*," says the Apostle, "lifting up holy hands, without wrath, and doubting." God said to Ezekiel, "Go forth into the plain, and there I will talk with thee." Isaac made a closet of the field. Daniel, of the river-side, as well as of his chamber. Nathaniel, of the fig-tree. Peter, of the housetop.

A variety here must be admitted, or the duty cannot be performed by many, at all. For what numbers are there who are unable to command a convenient room for religious engagement. This is a trying case: and especially to those who have been accustomed to enjoy such an advantage. The preacher knew a pious female, who had been reduced from a mansion, and compelled to occupy a hired and contracted apartment; yet nothing in the humiliating and distressing change seemed to affect her, but her want now of a place of seclusion, in which to indulge her private devotion. For the "peculiar people," even in common circumstances, fail not to give proof of their distinction: "They that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit." If, my Christian friends, you have the privilege of accommodation, be grateful for it, and use it well: and if you have not, remember your Heavenly Father knoweth it, and that where "there is first a willing mind, a man is accepted according to what he hath, and not according to what he hath not." Be as retired as you *can*, since you cannot be so retired as you *would;* and if your circumstances will not allow of your being hid, and some of your family must witness your exercises, be not afraid of opposing the Saviour's pleasure. Though you are seen of men, you are not seeking to be seen by them.

It is possible to retire mentally, even in company; and many an act of devotion is performed by the Christian without the formality of the exercise, when he is busied in his ordinary concerns. Nehemiah worshipped secretly, without retirement; and while, as cup-bearer, he was performing his office in attending on the king, "prayed to the God of heaven."

The Jews had their Proseuchæ, oratories, or praying-houses, in secluded situations, by streams of water, and in woods, and on the sides of mountains. The Scripture more than once refers to such places. In one of these it is probable our Saviour passed the night he spent in devotion; and in one of these Paul seems to have addressed his hearers in the vicinage of Philippi. They were a pleasing and a wise provision; as persons could here indulge themselves in private devotion whenever they were prompted by disposition and opportunity; and especially those who had scarcely any other sacred retreat. We have not such accommodations; but nature itself, during a large portion of

the year, affords us advantages; and it is wonderful that persons do not oftener avail themselves of these interesting spots of retirement. We have known some who, whenever the season and the weather allowed, retired thus, to perform their morning and evening devotions. Instead of their minds being diverted, and their thoughts dissipated, by the scenery, the works of God refreshed and impressed them, and furnished them with excitements and assistance. And there are those, now living, who, if ever they feel devout, feel it in a garden, or a field, or a meadow. The bubbling spring, the apple-tree, among the trees of the wood, the rose of Sharon, the lily of the valley, the purple rising, and the golden setting of the sun, aid their communion with Him who is all in all. The sowing of the grain, the blade, the ear, the full corn in the ear; the mower filling his hand, and the binder of sheaves his bosom; the husbandman and the gleaner—all these teach them to think and feel devoutly. They love the creatures of their God, and feel them their friends; and while the herd grazes at their feet, and the sheep repose at their side, and the lambs sport in sight, a voice seems to say, "Thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field; and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee." They hear God in the breeze; they sing his praise in the note of the bird; they make every scene a book; every object a preacher; every place a temple.

We only add, what an advantage is the omnipresence of devotion, in that solitude which is not chosen, but brought upon us by the necessity of circumstances: when lover and friend are put far from us by death, and the heart within us desolate; when travelling, and we droop in the loneliness that is felt in the midst of strangers; when, by distance or condition, our connections are beyond our reach, and we inaccessible to them. Ah! says Jonah, in the midst of the sea, "I will look again towards thy holy temple." "From the ends of the earth," says David, "will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed." Cowper has not overlooked this consolation, in the language he has put into the mouth of the lonely islander—

> "But the sea-fowl is gone to her nest,
> The beast is laid down in his lair;
> E'en here is a season of rest,
> And I to my cabin repair.

There's mercy in every place,
And mercy, encouraging thought!
Gives even affliction a grace,
And reconciles man to his lot."

We consider it,

II. With regard to TIME.

When are we to enter our closet? and how *long* are we to remain there? You are not to be there *always*. You will hear, as we proceed, that the family, the church, the world, have all claims upon you. Every duty has its season, in which alone it is beautiful and acceptable. "No duty," says bishop Hopkins, "will be approved of God, that appears before him stained with the murder of another duty." Yea, a Christian sometimes forces himself away from the delights of solitude, to engage in services, far less pleasing than lying down in these green pastures, and feeding beside these still waters. But self-indulgence, even when the enjoyment is religious, must yield to the will of his Heavenly Father, as soon as it is known.

Retirement, however, should be *frequent*. Yet, if you ask, *how* frequent? I do not pretend absolutely to determine. The Scripture does not decide: it was needless to decide—as needless as the prescribing how often you should eat and drink. Your wants will regulate the one, and your love will regulate the other. Love is the Christian's grand principle; and love does not require to be bound: it is ingenuous; it is urgent; it is contriving; and will get, with all possible expedition, to its object. Besides, no rule *can* be laid down that will apply equally to all. There is a great difference in our conditions, and our callings. At different periods, too, the providence of God may vary our duties. Thus the good people formerly spent much more time alone, than the peculiarities of the day in which we live, will allow us. It does not follow that they had more piety than Christians now: their religion was more compressed, and flowed in a deeper channel; but that of modern Christians, though shallower, is more diffusive and rapid. They had not those openings for activities abroad—those calls to extensive and manifold beneficence and exertions, which the followers of Christ now have. These, therefore, cannot gratify themselves by spending hours together in their loved seclusion: they hear a thousand voices crying, "Come, and

help us." They see that "the fields are already white unto harvest:" they know that "the harvest is great;" that "the labourers are few;" that the season is short; that the weather is uncertain; and the consequences of negligence, not only incalculable, but remediless.

Christians, however, should get as much leisure for the closet as they are able. And in order to this, they should guard against the waste of time; they should economise time; they should redeem time from indecision, and trifling, and especially from the vile and wretched consumptions of unnecessary sleep. David mentions three times a day: "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud." Daniel observed the same rule: "He went into his house; and his windows being opened in his chamber towards Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime." This was a custom much recommended, and observed by many of our forefathers; they thought, and they wisely thought, that a few moments of retirement in the middle of the day, as well as morning and evening, tended to check temptation and vanity, and to keep the mind in the things of God. But *twice* a day, at least, the Christian will withdraw. Less than this will not surely keep us "in the fear of the Lord all the day long"—and for this, the morning and evening will be deemed the most suitable periods. Under the law, a lamb was offered every morning and every evening. How much is there in each of these returning seasons to excite and to impress! "It is a good thing," says the Psalmist, "to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O Most High. To show forth thy loving-kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night."

As to the particular hour, this must be a matter of discretion: only it should be as early as possible both in the morning and evening, to avoid disturbance in the one, and drowsiness in the other. I will put amusements out of the question. But if you return late from visiting, it is better to retire even late than not at all. Yet in many of these cases would it not be preferable to retire a few moments before you go? Would you be less prepared for company? Would you be less safe? Would you be less edifying?

What may be done at any time, is often done at no time: and while we have no plan or purpose, we are open to every casualty that may seize us, and turn us aside. It is, there-

fore, necessary to have *appointed* seasons for retirement; and desirable to adhere to them as invariably as we can.

There are also *occasional* and *extraordinary* calls to private devotion, when more than usual time should be allowed, that the mind may be affected with the event, and obtain the peculiar assistance the case requires. I should have a poor opinion of that Christian, who would not employ more than common retirement, when going to change his residence, his calling, his condition in life; or to take any important step, the consequences of which may affect not only his comfort, but his conduct and character for ever. When Jacob was going to meet his exasperated brother Esau, who was coming against him with four hundred men, he was found alone wrestling with the angel. When our Saviour was going to ordain his twelve Apostles, "He went out into a mountain to pray; and continued all night in prayer to God." And when his hour of suffering was drawing near, we find him in the garden of Gethsemane, and retiring three times even from his selected disciples, and praying.—Let us,

III. Consider this retirement with regard to its ENGAGEMENTS.

Many retire; but the tradesman retires to cast up his accounts, and to plan his schemes; the statesman, to enjoy his relaxation and ease; the philosopher, to pursue his theories and experiments; the poet, to rove among the aspects of nature, or to lose himself in creations of his own—and perhaps God is not in all their thoughts. So far from inviting *him* into their solitude, when they apprehend his approach, they repel the impertinent intruder; and say unto God, "Depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." But we are speaking of religious retirement. The Christian withdraws for three purposes.

First, He is engaged in *reading*. This enlarges his views, and impresses his mind, and furnishes him with aid to devotion. But *what* does he peruse? Principally the Scriptures. I say principally, because other books may be occasionally read to advantage, and we have a plenitude of excellent works for the closet. Yet, I confess, the Scriptures alone appear to be the best reading in retirement, especially for the poor, and those who have little leisure. They are the fountain; other books are streams, and streams are seldom entirely free from something of the quality of the

soil through which they flow: and who would not draw the water of life for himself from the spring-head! They come immediately from God, and lead immediately to him! There is a boundless variety and fulness in them. They are always new. They entertain, while they teach; and profit, while they please. There is always something in them that bears upon our own character and condition, however peculiar it may be. "They are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." I would recommend, generally, a regular reading of this sacred volume; for every word of God is pure: and whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning; that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope. But "let him that readeth understand." It is better to peruse a paragraph with attention and reflection, than carelessly, and without observation, to run over several chapters.—For,

Secondly, He is engaged in *meditation*. And, my brethren, it is desirable that you should employ your own powers; for you will be more affected and benefited by the efforts of your own minds, than by the thoughts of others. The faculty will be improved and increased by exercise; and cannot be acquired without it, any more than a man can learn to swim by never entering the water. And surely you cannot be at a loss for subjects. If your reading does not supply you immediately with materials, there are the seasons of the year, the state of the world, the condition of your family, your own individual circumstances, temporal and spiritual. Two subjects are always at hand—your own depravity and unworthiness, of which fresh proof is given every day and every hour; and the "love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." In *his* sufferings and glory, the angels always find enough to attract and engage their profoundest thoughts; and shall these be less interesting to *you*,—to whom they are not only true, but important; not only wonderful, but infinitely necessary? They are all your salvation; let them be all your desire: and say, with David, "My meditation of Him shall be sweet; I will rejoice in the Lord."—"My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips, when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches."—"How precious are thy

thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand. When I awake, I am still with thee."—Whatever the subject of your meditation may be, content not yourselves with considering it generally and abstractedly; but take some particular view of it, and bring it home to yourselves. "Is the Lord *thy* portion, O my soul? Dost *thou* hope in him? Art *thou* an heir of this promise? Dost *thou* stand in the way of this threatening? Art *thou* living in the performance or neglect of this duty? Say not, 'and what shall this man do?' but, 'Lord, what wilt thou have *me* to do?'"

Thirdly, He is employed there in *prayer*. This is the special design of it. This is what our Saviour here enjoins: "Enter into thy closet; and when thou hast shut thy door, *pray*." If ever you are at a loss to meditate, surely you can never be at a loss to pray! How numberless are your wants! How much have you to implore for yourselves and others! How much to confess at the foot of the cross! How much to call forth your thanksgivings and praise! And all this is included in prayer.

And the manner need not discourage you. For here the excellency does not consist in the mode of expression—the desire is all in all. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." Even words are not necessary here. God reads deep meaning in the tear; and hears heavenly eloquence in the sighs of those that seek him: and often the most acceptable and successful intercession is made "with groanings which cannot be uttered."

These are the engagements of the Christian in his retired moments. But it is not necessary that he should perform all these exercises always: though it is very desirable that they should be all included; or that he should observe them precisely in the order we have stated. They may, sometimes, alternately precede each other; and they may sometimes be intermingled. We have an instance of the blending together of these exercises in the retirement of David, with the recital of which we shall conclude this division of our discourse. For, as soon as Nathan had waited upon him, and had delivered the words of the vision, "Then went King David in and sat before the Lord, and he said, Who *am* I, O Lord God, and what *is* my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord God; but thou hast spoken also of thy

servant's house for a great while to come: and *is* this the manner of man, O Lord God? And what can David say more unto thee? for thou, Lord God, knowest thy servant. For thy word's sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things, to make thy servant know *them*. And now, O Lord God, the word that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant, and concerning his house, establish *it* for ever, and do as thou hast said. For thou, O Lord of Hosts, God of Israel, hast revealed to thy servant, saying, I will build thee an house: therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee. And now, O Lord God, thou *art* that God, and thy words be true, and thou hast promised this goodness unto thy servant: therefore now let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may continue for ever before thee: for thou, O Lord God, hast spoken *it:* and with thy blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed for ever."—Let us consider retirement,

IV. With regard to its MOTIVES.

The obligation might be enforced from the authority of God, whose will is supremely binding on the consciences of all those who are informed of it; and whose language ought always to be, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." It might also be enforced by example. We could show, how the most eminent saints, and the most *busy* too, have abounded in this employment—and at the head of all, we could present the Lord Jesus himself, whose conduct has the force of a law upon his followers; and who in vain profess to abide in him unless they also walk even as he walked. How often do we read of his withdrawing himself, to be alone with his heavenly Father! And can any of you dare to intimate, Ah! he needed retirement; but I can dispense with it! But while it is enjoined by the highest authority and sanctioned by the highest example, it comes recommended by the highest advantage: and every thing unites to prove that it is a reasonable service. Mrs. Berry says in her Diary, "I would not be hired out of my closet for a thousand worlds. I never enjoy such hours of pleasure, and such free and entire communion with God, as I have here: and I wonder that any can live prayerless, and deprive themselves of the greatest privilege allowed to them." If the twelve Apostles were living in your neighbourhood,

and you had access to them, and this intercourse drew you away from the closet, they would prove a real injury to your souls; for no creature can compensate for the want of communion with God.

We may connect retirement with *the acquisition of knowledge.* "Through desire, a man having separated himself, seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom." This is peculiarly true of one kind of wisdom, and which the Heathen Oracle pronounced to be of heavenly descent—Self-Knowledge. For how can those, who are for ever engaged in company, and engrossed by business, become acquainted with their character and their state? How can they compare themselves accurately with the word of truth; and look after the workings of the hidden man of the heart; and weigh their motives; and measure their deficiencies; and detect the sins of their holy things; and "walk humbly with their God," like those who retire with him, and in his "light see light?"

Retirement is necessary to *reduce the force of secular influence.* Where is it the world deceives us, allures us, overcomes us? Not when we are alone. Not when it is contemplated in the presence of our Bible and our God. There the fascination drops off. There we see that whatever successes we have gained, we are still losers, without "the one thing needful." There we feel that the favour of man, who is a worm, is less than nothing and vanity, compared with the friendship of God. There we wonder that we have ever submitted to be the slaves of folly; and vow against the tyrant in future.

> "When I can say, my God is mine;
> When I can feel his glories shine;
> I tread the world beneath my feet,
> And all that earth calls good or great."

Is the *resemblance of God* a trifle? *This* results from our intimacy with him. "Evil communications corrupt good manners." But while "a companion of fools shall be destroyed, he that walketh with wise men, shall be wise." We soon assume the manners, and imbibe the spirit of those with whom we are familiar, especially if the individual be a distinguished personage, and we pre-eminently revere and love him. Upon this principle, the more we have to do with God, the more we shall grow into his likeness, and "be followers of him, as dear children." When Moses

descended from communion with him, his face shone: and although he was not aware of the lustre himself, the people could not stedfastly behold him for the glory of his countenance; and he was constrained to hide it under a veil. The Christian, too, may be insensible of his excellencies and proficiencies; but his profiting will appear unto all men; all will take knowledge of him that he has been with Jesus.

Retirement *prepares us for all other services.* Judge Hale, in his Letters to his Children, makes no scruple to say, "If I omit praying, and reading a portion of God's blessed word, in the morning, nothing goes well with me all the day." Dr. Boerhaave said, that "his daily practice of retiring for an hour in the morning, and spending it in devotion and meditation, gave him firmness and vigour for the business of the whole day." He who goes forth from God, after inquiring his will, and committing himself to his care—he is the best fitted for all the successes or disappointments of life. It is alone with God, that the minister best qualifies himself for his work: it is there that he is wrought into the due temper of his office; it is there he rises above the fear of man, that "bringeth a snare," and resolves not "to shun to declare *all* the counsel of God;" it is there he is inspired to say,

> "Careless, myself a dying man,
> Of dying men's esteem:
> Happy, O God, if thou approve,
> Though all beside condemn."

He is the last man in the world who should be "to be had." He should learn to resist, with the firmness of a martyr, all encroachments on his holy solitude. His hearers will soon learn, by the want of savour in his ministrations, that he loves to be more abroad than at home, and is fonder of the parlour than the closet. Whereas the man that issues from frequent and long retirement, will ascend the pulpit as Aaron entered the tabernacle of the congregation, when the holy oil had been poured upon his head, and the fragrance filled the place. To speak of the Christian's preparation for public worship, may be deemed legal or superstitious by some; but the Scripture speaks of it, and the godly have always found their account in it. Previous retirement detaches the mind from earth; it composes the thoughts; it tends to prevent distractions in waiting upon

God; and aids to produce that seriousness of spirit, which is essential to our edification by the means of grace. They will always profit most by the sanctuary, who are much in the closet.

It furnishes also *a good evidence of our state.* Do not judge of yourselves by what you are before men—What are you with God? Your sincerity is chiefly evinced by your regard to the *unseen* duties of religion. These show that you are actuated by pious principle, and not by any of those inferior motives which produce appearances. In public duties you are open to the observation of others. Hypocrites may lift their hands and eyes; and affect great fervour and zeal. Curiosity may prompt our repairing to the ordinances of the temple; and the dispensation even of divine truth, in excellency of speech and elegance of manner, may prove an amusement; and persons may flock to it as to a concert. We know it was so with Ezekiel's hearers. "And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument; for they hear thy words, but they do them not." If you are with a person whom you dislike, his presence is tolerable in a large company, where you have other attractions—though even then you would rather he was absent; but should they withdraw, how embarrassed and miserable would you be with him alone! Some of you seem attached to the house of God; but we often wonder how you would feel, if, upon the separation of the assembly, you were "*detained*" like Doeg "*before the Lord.*"

The *freedom* we enjoy in the exercise, is no inconsiderable recommendation of private devotion. Here we come even to his seat; we reach the secret place of the Most High. Here we are free from the restraints we feel in public. Here we are not condemned as deceivers, or ridiculed as enthusiasts, if we prostrate ourselves before God, or pray like our Saviour, "with strong cryings and tears." I know not why we should be ashamed to be seen weeping, yet so it frequently is—but here the eye can pour out tears unto God. Here we may sigh, and pause, and kneel a third time, "saying the same words." Here the mind is affected with those minute but touching recollections and peculiarities which cannot be admitted into public worship. Here we may pray for others, in a way we could not do before them, without offence. Would they abide to hear us beseech God to deliver—One of them from the love of

money? Another, from a fondness for extravagance? A third, from a hateful and odious temper? Here you can lay open, with proper self-abasement, the secret workings of your own pride, or envy, or carnality. Here you may pour into the bosom of God things which you could not divulge to your dearest friend or relation. Every heart has a bitterness of its own; and this is frequently what it is least at liberty to communicate. But here no secret is hid—here no complaint is suppressed. Here, "in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, we make known our requests unto God;" and, as the consequence of the full disclosure, we are "careful for nothing;" and "feel a peace that passeth all understanding, keeping our heart and mind through Christ Jesus."

But ought we to overlook the *promise* which the Saviour has here given us, and with which he would engage us to the performance of this duty? It would be a reflection upon his wisdom and goodness.—"Enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to *thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.*" Let us observe the inducement.

It includes the *Divine Presence.* "Thy Father which is *in secret.*" He is every where; but he is, it seems, peculiarly in the closet. Here "he is waiting to be gracious, and exalted to have mercy." Here is no terror to make you afraid. Here he is, not as a *Judge* on his tribunal, to arraign you as criminals; nor even as a *Monarch* on a throne of state to receive you as subjects; but as your *Father*, eager to embrace you as "the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty." Do children dread to enter a room where a loved and honoured father is to be found? Would not this be a sufficient attraction? "When shall I come," says David, "and appear before God?"

It includes his *inspection.* "And thy Father which *seeth* in secret." He is not regardless of you; he is not ignorant of your condition; he knows what is the mind of the spirit. Your desires are before him, and your groaning is not hid from him. He sees you, but not with eyes of flesh. He is no respecter of persons. He will not fail to notice you, however poor and despised. He views you with approbation. The prayer of the upright is his delight. "Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely."

It includes *recompence.* "He *shall reward thee openly*"

He "never said to the seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain." But surely it is enough for a benefactor to be ready to attend to the applications of the distressed, without promising to reward beggars for knocking at his door; and to bestow on them honour that shall distinguish them in public, as if, instead of being urged by their necessities, they had been performing some very meritorious action! The advantage of prayer is all our own: there can be nothing like *desert* in it. And yet to stimulate us to attend to a course founded entirely in a regard to our welfare, the Lord of all makes himself a debtor to his suppliants; and engages to confer upon them not only a real, but a public and acknowledged recompence. Even *here* he puts a difference between his people and others. Even *now* he induces observers to say, "Verily there is a reward for the righteous;" "This is the seed which the Lord hath blessed." He can make even a Balaam exclaim, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob! and thy tabernacles, O Israel! Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." But if at present any dispensations humble them, any clouds obscure them, they will be exalted in due time, they will soon shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. "Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the heart, and then shall every man have praise of God."

And now, my dear hearers, upon the ground of this important subject, let me address you with all fidelity and seriousness. For it is not a light thing, it is your life. I remember the observation of an old divine, and it is not too strongly expressed: "It is impossible for a man to *be* godly, who neglects secret devotion, and next to impossible that he should ever *become* so." To which he adds, "You may as well talk of a wise fool, a wicked saint, a sober drunkard, or an honest thief, as of a prayerless Christian!" If this witness be true, what are we to think even of many who make some pretensions to religion? Their lives are full of action, and void of thought. They visit the temple, and are ever hearing sermons; but they are shy of the closet. Some of them, in this day of pious and benevolent institutions and exertions, make a figure in public; and their zeal flames at a distance; but it diminishes as it approaches nearer home, and it goes out in

a dreadful darkness and coldness between God and their own souls.

In others, a little of this practice of retirement remains, lingering as the effect of custom or conviction only. But though they do not constantly, they yet frequently neglect private reading, meditation, and prayer. Business, company, the most trifling preventions, keep them from the duty; and they must be aware, if they would deal honestly with themselves, that whatever they do in this way, is their *task*, and not their pleasure. And need they be told to what character Job alludes, when he asks, "Will he *delight* himself in the Almighty, will he *always* call upon God?"

But some have *wholly* incurred the reproach; "Thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; thou hast been weary of me, O Israel." Yes—for it was not thus with you once: you have left off to be wise, and to do good. "Apostacy," says Henry, "begins at the closet door." There your irreligion commenced; and ever since this revolt from God, you have been departing more and more from him. O! what a day was that, when you first left your apartment without prayer! Perhaps you have forgotten it. But, no! How can you forget your hesitation—your strugglings with conscience—the shame and uneasiness you endured, so that you longed and endeavoured as soon as possible to lose the feeling.—And you succeeded. You felt less the day following. At length you obtained a victory over every moral embarrassment. And now you lie down and rise up like the beasts that perish, and feel nothing.

But allow me to ask, Is not this neglect of religious retirement, a proof that the love of God is not in you? You treat men with attention; but he is not in all your thoughts. You salute your fellow-creatures according to their rank and quality; but you never give him the glory that is due unto his holy name. You visit your friends and acquaintances, but you never call upon God, though he is not far from any one of you. And have you nothing to do with *Him?* Is he not your Creator? Your Preserver? Your Governor? Your Judge? Have you nothing to hope from him? Nothing to fear? In his hand your breath is, and his are all your ways. Men deny the depravity of human nature: but we want no other proof of the mortifying truth, than this alienation of your mind from God. Can this be an innocent state? Could this be the condition of man, when God made him

upright? No! We do not go, we need not go, to the refuse of society in prisons and galleys. Setting aside all immorality and profligacy; when we see creatures shunning their Creator; and beneficiaries hating to retain their Benefactor in their knowledge; when we see men, instead of loving God with all their heart, banishing him from his own temple, and forbidding him the bosom that was made for himself—we know they *must* be fallen, and perverted, and guilty creatures: and without pardon and renovation can never enter into the kingdom of God. And this is your character; your danger. You are living without God. You are enemies to him. In vain you reckon upon your virtue and safety, because you may be free from iniquities which disgrace others. Sins of omissions expose to condemnation, as well as positive transgressions. They are violations of the same authority. He that forbids, also enjoins. And you show your contempt of God, by neglect, as well as by insult. If two persons living together in the same house were never to speak to each other, it would be deemed by all, as much a proof of dislike, as their fighting. Be not therefore deceived. You are wronging your own souls. All they that are far from God shall perish. "The wicked shall be turned into hell, with all the nations that forget God."

Is not, therefore, another cause of your neglect of the closet, a guilty conscience? You are afraid to enter into solitude. You know that however cheerful you appear, you are far from being happy in reality. You have your occasional forebodings; and it is safer not to look into your condition lest they should be confirmed. You surround yourselves with company, lest, being alone, truth should invade your delusion, or you should be haunted by the ghosts of your own thoughts. The value of your amusements does not consist in the pleasure they yield, but in their power to divert you from your reflection. And this power they must soon lose. And its effect at present is limited. It is no easy thing to keep out light, where there are so many apertures to blind up; or to sleep on, where stillness is impossible. What a life of constraint and uneasiness are you leading! "There is no peace, saith my God, unto the wicked."

Another prevention is to be found in creature attraction and worldly cares. You "mind earthly things." Your farm and your merchandise; your rising early, and sitting up late, and compassing sea and land, to carry some tem-

poral interest—these furnish you with excess; these yield you substitutes; these keep you from seeking those things that are above. We wish not to render you indifferent to your stations in life, or to induce you to undervalue the good things which he gives you to enjoy. But while you are "not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." "Labour not" only, or principally, "for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life." "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." And if you obtain them not in this subordination, you will find them to be nothing but vanity and vexation of spirit. Your table will become a snare. Your prosperity will destroy you.

We have thus again called you to enter your closet. And as to many of you, it is probable the application will be again refused. But another call will soon be addressed to you. It will be to die. *That* call you cannot refuse. You live in a crowd—but you must die alone. You now hate silence—but you are hastening to "the house appointed for all living;" and

> "Darkness, death, and long despair,
> Reign in eternal silence there."

LECTURE III.

THE CHRISTIAN, IN THE FAMILY.

"*Then David returned to bless his household.*"—Sam. vi. 20.

The human frame is "a body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working of every part." There is nothing in it irregular; nothing defective; nothing superfluous. The eye cannot say to the ear, I have no need of thee; nor the hand to the foot, I have no need of thee; the members are all connected with, all dependent upon, all subservient to each other; and were you to separate them, the body, which is composed of the whole, would be at once disfigured and destroyed.

It is the same with the system of Christianity, as presented in the Scriptures of truth. By separation, it loses both its beauty and its energy: its beauty—for this consists in the fine adjustment of the parts; its energy—for this results from the harmonious operation of the whole. What God therefore has joined together, whether it be doctrine and duty, or command and promise, or privilege and service, or hope and fear—let not man put asunder.

The zeal of some professors is not always according to knowledge, or such as to evince a "heart right with God." It is not full of "good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy." For these are nearly allied. Partiality is always proof of hypocrisy; for if you are upright before God, and sincerely desirous of pleasing him, you will come to him, not to dictate, but to submit; not to choose, but to say, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments."

A Christian is not a perfect character; but he *is* a character: he is always the same; every where the same. The same in prosperity and adversity; the same in public and in private; the same in the dwelling-place, as in the temple;

the same in the family, as in the church. If there be any difference, his *immediate* connexions will have the advantage; and looking towards those who have the best opportunities of knowing and observing his religion, he will be able to say, "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience; that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward." When Whitfield was asked, whether a certain person was a good man, he replied, "I know not—I never lived with him." And Philip Henry remarks, that "Every man, in religion, is really what he is relatively."

We have to exhibit the Christian this morning
In the Family.

Here it is supposed that he *has* a family. He is not a poor, illiberal, solitary individual; preferring vice, or mopishness, or an escape from expense, care, and trouble, to a state which was designed to complete the happiness of Adam in Paradise; and which inspiration has pronounced to be "honourable in all." He believes in the wisdom and veracity of God, who has said, "It is not good for man to be alone:" and instead of reflecting upon his parents, and undervaluing and injuring the most amiable part of society, where too they are not even allowed to complain; he forms no leading permanent plan of life, in which marriage is not considered as the foundation. And having entered the condition, he will be anxious to fulfil its duties. He will love his wife, even as himself. He will train up his children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." He will behave towards his servants, as one who knows that he has "a Master in heaven," and that there is no respect of persons with God. He will say, with David, "I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. Oh! when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes. I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not come nigh me!"

"Then David returned to bless his household." *Then*—for the period and the occasion are previously marked. The day had been a very pleasing one to David; but it had proved a very active and busy one too. For many hours he had been engaged in bringing up the Ark of God from the house of Obededom into the city of Jerusalem. He had

not only attended to witness all the indications of piety and joy, but had contributed himself in the sacred performances. And when the symbol of the Divine presence was set in the tabernacle prepared to receive it, he offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings before the Lord; and dismissed the multitude with presents, after blessing them in the name of the Lord. But the monarch does not make him forget the master; nor does public service hinder domestic. "Then David returned to bless his household."—Let us pass from this instance of excellency, to consider at large,

I. THE WAY IN WHICH THE HEAD OF A FAMILY MAY BLESS HIS HOUSEHOLD.

II. To show THE REASONS WHICH SHOULD ENGAGE HIM TO ATTEMPT IT.

III. To ANSWER SOME OBJECTIONS TO THE DUTY.

And,

IV. To CONCLUDE WITH SOME ANIMADVERSIONS AND ADMONITIONS RESPECTING IT.

I. If it be asked, How the head of a family may BLESS HIS HOUSEHOLD? we would answer, by *Example*—by *Government*—by *Discipline*—by *Instruction*—by *Attendance on the Means of Grace*—by *the Performance of Domestic Devotion.*

Some of these particulars, we are aware, in a degree imply and include each other; yet they are distinct enough for the utility of separate remark. Thus we distinguish countries and provinces; and though in some places they approximate, and where they unite, the air, and the soil, and the produce will display resemblance and even sameness.

First, He may "bless his household" by *Example.* I begin with this, because nothing can supply the want of personal religion. He who despises his own soul, will feel little disposition to attend to the souls of others. Destitute of principle, he will be determined only by circumstances; and his exertions, if he makes any, will be partial and rare. Having nothing to animate him from experience, his endeavours will be dull and cold. Where all is merely formal and official, a man will not go far even in the *use* of means; but what probability is there of his *success*, when he *does* use them? Who loves to take his meat from a leprous hand? A drunkard will make a poor preacher of sobriety to servants. A proud and passionate father is a wretched

recommender of humility and meekness to his children. What those who are under his care *see*, will more than counteract what they *hear;* and all his efforts will be rejected with the question, "Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery?" To what is it owing, that the offspring of many professors are worse than those of other men? Inconsistency. Inconsistency is more injurious than neglect. The one may be resolved into a forgetfulness of principle; the other shows a contempt of it. You little imagine how early and how effectively children remark things. They notice them when they seem incapable of any distinct observation; and while you would suppose no impression could be *left* on such soft materials, a fixed turn is given to many a part of the future character. You must therefore reverence them; and be circumspect even in your most free and relaxing moments. You must do, as well as teach; and while you are humble before God, you must be able to say to them, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."

It is commonly observed, that example does more than precept. But the young are peculiarly alive to example; and when example has the advantage of nearness, and constant exhibition, and unites both authority and endearment, it must prove the most powerful and insensible transformer; and requires in those who furnish it, and who will necessarily be imitated, that they "abstain from all appearance of evil." We only add here, that they who constitute your moral charge, are not so much affected and swayed by any direct and positive urgings, as by the presence, and exemplification, and sight of "whatsoever things are lovely and of good report." The force of the hot-house is not to be compared with the genial influence of the spring, by which, without violence, and without noise, every thing is drawn into bud and bloom.

Secondly, He may "bless his household" by *Government*. Order is heaven's first law. God himself is the example of it; and by nothing does he bless his creatures more, than by the steadiness of the order of nature, and the regularity of the seasons. What uncertainty is there in the ebbing and flowing of the tides? What deviations in the changes of the moon? The sun knoweth his going down, and his rising up. Even the comet is *not* eccentric; in

traversing the boundlessness of space, he performs his revolutions of fifty or a hundred years, to a moment. And in all the works of God, what seems disorder, is only arrangement beyond our reach: for "in wisdom he has made them all."

Hear the Apostle. "Let every thing be done decently, and in order." The welfare of your household requires that you should observe times. Every thing should have its season—your business; your meals; your devotional exercises; your rising, and your rest. The periods for these will vary with the condition of families; but labour to be as punctual as circumstances will allow. It is of importance to peace, and temper, and diligence, and economy. Confusion is friendly to every evil work. Disorder also multiplies disorder. For no one thinks of being exact with those who set at nought all punctuality.

The same principle requires that you should keep every thing in its place. Subordination is the essence of all order and rule. Never suffer the distinctions of life to be broken down. All violations of this kind injure those who are below the gradation, as well as those above it. The relinquishment of authority may be as wrong as its excesses. He that is responsible for the duties of any relation, should claim its prerogatives and powers—how else is he to discharge them? Be kind and affable to servants; but let nothing divest you of the mistress. Be the tenderest of fathers; but *be* the father—and no sensible woman will, I am sure, be offended if I add—Be the most devoted of husbands, but be the husband.

Thirdly, By *Discipline*. This regards the treatment of offences: "For it must needs be that offences will come:" and what is to be done with them? Here two extremes are to be avoided. The one is severity. You are not to magnify trifles into serious evils; and instead of a cheerful countenance, to wear a gloom; and instead of commending, to be always finding fault; and instead of enlivening every thing around you, like the weather in spring, to be a continual dropping in a rainy, winter-day. Instead of making home repulsive, let it possess every attraction, and abound with every indulgence and allowance the exclusions of Scripture do not forbid. Instead of making a child tremble and retreat, gain his confidence and love, and let him run into your arms. "Fathers," says the Apostle, (for this fault lies mostly with our sex,) "Fathers, provoke not your

children to wrath, lest they be discouraged." The other is indulgence—a foolish fondness, or connivance at things actually wrong, or pregnant with evil. This often shows itself with regard to favourites. And here, ye mothers, let not *your* good be evil spoken of. Do not smother your darlings to death with kisses; and let not your tender bosom be an asylum for delinquents appealing from the *deserved* censures of the father. The success of such appeals, with kind but weak minds, is very mischievous: it makes preferences where there should be an evenness of regard, and tends to check and discourage wholesome reproof; and "he that spareth the rod hateth his son, but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes." "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying." Here Eli failed: "his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not." Here also David erred; he had not displeased Adonijah at any time in saying, "Why hast thou done so?" When the head of a family cannot prevent the introduction of improper books; the visits of infidel, or profane companions; the indulgence of ensnaring usages, and indecent discourse; the putting forth pretensions above his rank; the incurring of expenses beyond his income;—does *he* bear rule in his own house? Is it thus that *he* puts away evil from his tabernacle? Is it thus that *he* blesses his household?

For what is Abraham commended? "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the ways of the Lord to do justice and judgment." Not that he was the tyrant; and terrified his family with the blackness of his frown, or the roughness of his voice. We no more admire a despot in the house, than in the state: but he was decided and firm; not only telling his servants and children what they were to avoid or what they were to perform, but requiring and enforcing obedience by the authority of his station. But *proper* authority requires dignity, as well as power. What can he do, whose levities, and follies, and ignorance, and weakness, deprive him of all awe, and all influence and all impression? Are we to smile or sigh at the thought of some children being in subjection to *their* parents; and of some wives being called upon to reverence *their* husbands? Is there no law to protect females and children? As to children, the case with them is not voluntary; they deserve pity. But no sympathy is due to females who throw themselves into the

empire of folly and weakness; and willingly choose a condition, whose duties it is sinful for them to neglect, and impossible for them to perform.

Fourthly, By *Instruction*. "For the soul to be without knowledge, it is not good." And this holds supremely true of religious knowledge. Hear the address of Moses: "These words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates." Here observe not only the duty, but the manner in which he has enjoined the performance of it. He would make it a constant, a familiar, an easy, a pleasing exercise—a recreation rather than a task. In another place he says, "When thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, what mean the testimonies and the statutes and the judgments which the Lord our God hath commanded you? Then thou shalt say unto thy son, we were Pharaoh's bond-men in Egypt; and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. And the Lord showed signs and wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household, before our eyes: and he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he sware unto our fathers. And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day. And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God as he hath commanded us." Nothing can be more natural than this recommendation. The curiosity of children is great, and will commonly, if judiciously treated, furnish you with sufficient opportunities to inform them. Their questions will show you the bias of their disposition, the state of their minds, and the nature and degree of the information it is proper to administer; and in various cases, it is less necessary to go before them, than to follow. Events too are always turning up; and these will afford a wise parent a thousand hints of natural and seasonable improvement. Yet there are those who levy a tax upon every thing their avarice, sagacity, and zeal can find, to promote the tem-

poral interest of their offspring; who never seize, and turn to a religious account, any of those occurrences of the day, and of the neighbourhood, whether pleasing or awful, that might so easily be made to speak not only to the understanding, but to the imagination and the heart.

Fifthly, By *securing their attendance on the Means of Grace.* Servants should be allowed opportunities of public worship and instruction, as often as circumstances will allow; and we admire the plan of our forefathers, who disengaged their domestics as much as possible on the Sabbath from the preparations of the table, that they might be at liberty to go themselves, and get food for their souls. Children also should be led to the house of God—though there is a proper time for their "showing unto Israel." In determining this, it is not easy to draw the line. If they are taken too early, besides hindering the attention of those who have the charge of them, there is danger that holy exercises will become irksome by frequent and long detentions, before they can feel any interest in them. Yet an early attendance is valuable, as it tends to render the habit natural; and impressions may be occasionally made, even upon infant minds, sufficient to lead them to inquire, and to aid you much in your endeavours to instruct them at home.

Lastly, By *Domestic Devotion.* This service ought to be performed every morning and evening. It includes prayer. Prayer is not only to be made *for* your family—(though this is a duty, and a privilege, and enables you to obtain for your household a thousand blessings,) but also *with* them. It takes in also reading the Scriptures. Mr. Henry goes further: "They," says he, "who daily pray in their houses do well; they that not only pray, but read the Scriptures, do better; but they do best of all, who not only pray, and read the Scriptures, but—sing the praises of God." This exercise is very enlivening, and tends to throw off the formality which adheres perhaps more to domestic worship than either to public or private devotion, as it allows of less variety. If singing be not practicable, a psalm or hymn may be read. It will often produce a good effect, by impressing the minds of servants and children. The whole of the service will help you in performing what we have previously recommended, the duty of teaching and admonishing your families. The psalm or hymn will furnish them with sentiments and sentences. The reading of the

word will store their minds with facts and doctrine. While the prayer itself will be no inconsiderable instructer. The very engagement will remind them of the presence and agency of God. Your addressing him for pardon, will convince them of guilt; your interceding for your country, will teach them patriotism; for your enemies, forgiveness of injuries; for all mankind, universal benevolence. Thus a man may bless his household.—Let us consider,

II. THE REASONS WHICH SHOULD ENGAGE HIM TO ATTEMPT IT.

For this purpose, let us view Domestic Religion,

First, In reference to *God*. To him it has—a relation of *responsibility*. We are required to glorify God in every condition we occupy; in every capacity we possess. A poor man is required to serve him: but if he becomes rich, his duty is varied and enlarged; and from the hour of his acquiring wealth, he will be judged by the laws of affluence. A single man is required to serve God as an individual only; but if he enters into connected life, he must serve God as the head of a family, and will be judged by the duties arising from his household-relation. God has given him a talent, and he is to make use of that talent. He has committed to him a trust, and he is to be faithful to that trust. He has made him a steward, and he is to give account of his stewardship. "I assigned you," will God say, "the empire of a family. To qualify you for the office, I furnished you with authority, and influence, and resources. How have you employed them? Where are the servants and children you were to have trained up for me?"

—A relation of *gratitude*. How much dost thou owe to his kindness and care! Who crowned the wish of thy heart, in granting thee the object of thy dearest choice? Behold thy wife, like a fruitful vine by the sides of thy house; and thy children, like "olive plants round about thy table." Who has supplied not only all thy personal, but all thy relative wants? Whose secret has been upon thy tabernacle? Whose providence has blessed the labour of thy hand? Whose vigilance has suffered no evil to befal thee, and no plague to come nigh thy dwelling? And wilt thou refuse to serve him, with a family which *he* has formed and secured, and sustained and indulged? And wilt thou, instead of

making thy house the temple of his praise, render it the grave of his mercies?

—A relation of *dependance.* Can you dispense with God in your family? What are all your schemes, all your exertions, all your expectations, without him? "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep." How wise is it then to secure the favour of one, who has all things under his control, and is able to make them all work together for your good, or conspire to your destruction. And has he not bound himself by promise and by threatening? "The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked; but he blesseth the habitation of the just." What may not be dreaded from the curse of the Almighty? What may not be expected from his blessing? Under the one, the evils of life become intolerable: we sow much, and bring home little; we earn wages to put it into a bag with holes; our table becomes a snare; our successes gender many foolish and hurtful lusts; our prosperity destroys us. Under the other, a little is better than the riches of many wicked; our trials are alleviated; our sorrows are tokens for good; our comforts are enjoyed with a relish others never taste; the voice of rejoicing and of salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous.—Therefore,

Secondly, View it in reference to *yourselves.* You ought to be concerned chiefly for your *spiritual* welfare; and should value things as they tend to restrain you from sin, and excite you to holiness. If this maxim cannot be denied, let us judge by this rule—the man who performs this duty, and—the man who neglects it. Can *he* give way to swearing and falsehood, who is going to hear *from* God, and to speak *to* him? Can *he* throw himself into a fury, who is just going to hold intercourse with the source of peace and love? Must he not guard his temper and conduct, even on the principle of consistency? The other exonerates himself from the reproach of hypocrisy; and because he makes no pretensions to duty, thinks he is justified in living as he pleases. And this it is that restrains many from adopting the practice. They think that it would embarrass them; that it would abridge their liberty; that it would fix upon them the charge of inconsistency. And so far they think justly. But here is their folly; in viewing a freedom from

moral motives and restraints as a privilege! and an obligation to urge them to what is right and beneficial in itself, as an hardship and complaint!

And the practice *is* not only right, but every way profitable. While you teach, you learn: while you do good, you are gaining good. Your mind will be tranquillized by a confidence in God, which you alone are justified in reposing, and which you alone *can* repose in him. How much does your comfort depend on the dutifulness of those that are under you! But how can you look for morality without piety? It is by teaching them to regard God, that you must teach them to regard yourselves, and to be diligent and submissive in their places. It is thus you bind them by sanctions the most powerful, and which operate in your absence, as well as when you are nigh. It is thus you are not only obeyed, but regarded and honoured. Religion, when it is consistently exemplified, always inspires respect and reverence. But what hold have the irreligious on the homage of others? So true it is even here, "They that despise me shall be lightly esteemed."—View it,

Thirdly, In reference to the *Family*. By how many ties ought the members of your household to be endeared! "And we *do* love them." But wherein does your love appear? Can you imagine that it only requires you to ask, what shall they eat, and what shall they drink, and wherewithal shall they be clothed? What is the body to the soul? What is time to eternity? Do you wish to do them good? Can any good equal that godliness which is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come?

Were you to suffer your children to go naked, to perish with hunger; were you to leave them in sickness to die alone, you would be shunned as monsters. But you are far more deserving of execration, if you infamously disregard their spiritual and everlasting welfare. Doubtless Herod was viewed with horror by those who had witnessed the massacre of the infants of Bethlehem: but he was far less cruel than some of you. He slew the children of others; you destroy your own. He only killed the body; you destroy both body and soul in hell. Had you any real love to your children, what would be your feelings in life, to see them going astray, and verifying, by the evils of their conduct, that the way of transgressors is hard—while conscious that you had done nothing to secure them from it! But

what at death would you think of a meeting that must take place between you and your children in the great day! Then they will rise up against you in the judgment, and cause you to be put to death.—"Cursed be the day of my birth! Why died I not from the womb? Why was I not as a hidden, an untimely birth, as infants that never see light? Thou father, and thou mother, the instruments of my being—to you I am under no obligations. You only consulted your barbarous inclinations—You gave me an existence over which you watched while I could not be guilty; but mercilessly abandoned me as soon as I became responsible—As the creature of a day, you provided for me; but as an immortal you left me—you made me—to perish. I execrate your cruelty. I call for damnation upon your heads—and the only relief of the misery to which you have consigned me, is, that I can reproach and torment you for ever."

From such a dreadful scene, how delightful is it to think what a happy meeting there will be between those who have blessed their households and the favoured subjects of their pious care! Yea, without going forward to this period of mutual and happy acknowledgment, what a joy unspeakable and full of glory must such benefactors feel even now, when they hear a servant saying—"Blessed be God for the hour I entered such a family. I was as ignorant and careless as a heathen—but there the eyes of my understanding were opened, there my feet were turned into the path of peace." Or when they hear a child confessing, "O! what a privilege that I was born of such parents! How early did they teach me to know the Holy Scriptures! How soon they led me to the throne of grace, and, by teaching me to pray, furnished me with the best privilege of life! How patiently they watched, and how tenderly they cherished, and how wisely they directed every pious sentiment and every holy purpose!—And,

> "As a bird each fond endearment tries,
> To tempt her new-fledged offspring to the skies,
> They tried each art, reproved each dull delay,
> Allured to brighter worlds, and led the way!"

It is thus their children rise up and called them blessed!—Let us view it,

Fourthly, in reference to *Visitants and Guests*. These, instead of inducing you to decline the practice, should fur-

nish you with argument in support of it. Wo be to you, if you shrink back from the duty in compliment to the rich, the infidel, the irreligious, or the dissipated—should such ever be found beneath your roof! For "he that is ashamed of me and of my words," says the Saviour, "of him will the Son of Man be ashamed, when he comes in the clouds of heaven, with the holy angels."

It is not by concealing your principles, but by owning them, verbally and practically, that you must be useful to others, and gain their respect. And here you have an opportunity to confess Him before men; and without going out of your way to effect it. It cannot appear to be sought after, to give offence. It comes, in the regular course of your household arrangement. And nothing is more likely, without effort and without officiousness, to awaken attention, to inform, to admonish. The preacher remembers well the acknowledgment of a man now with God. He moved in superior life; and from his rank and talents, and extensive and various acquaintance, was likely have persons frequently at his house who were strangers to his religious economy. He said his manner was, when the time of domestic service arrived, to inform them that he was always accustomed to worship God with his family: if they disliked the practice, they might remain; if they chose to attend, they might accompany him into the library. He said he had never known any that refused: and many of them owned they were much struck with the propriety and usefulness of the usage, and resolved, on their return, to adopt it themselves. The Lecturer has also known several individuals himself, whose religious course commenced during a visit to a family who thus honoured God, and were thus honoured by him. It is recorded, I believe, of Sir Thomas Abney, that even when he was lord mayor, and on the evening of the feast, he told the company that he always maintained the worship of God in his house; that he was now withdrawing for the purpose; and should presently return. There are few professors of religion who *could* have done this. They would not have had consciousness enough of their claim to confidence in their integrity. But where the thing was known to be, not the pretence, or show of extraordinary sanctity, but the steady and uniform operation of principle: not an exemption from his common conduct, but, fine as it was, only a fair specimen of the whole piece; this noble resolu-

tion must have produced some impression even in *such* an assembly.—Observe it,

Fifthly, in reference to *the Country*. None of us should live to ourselves. Every one should be concerned to benefit and improve a community in which he has enjoyed so many advantages. But we know that "righteousness exalteth a nation," and that "sin is a reproach to any people." What an enemy then are you, if irreligious, to a country that deserves so much at your hands! However loyally you may talk, you contribute to its danger and disgrace, not only by your personal transgressions, but by sending out into the midst of it, so much moral contagion, so many unprincipled and vicious individuals, from your own family. And how much would you befriend it were you to fear God yourselves; and to send forth those from under your care, who will serve their generation according to his will; and induce him to say, "Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it!" Who can imagine the good even *one* of these individuals may effect by his prayers, his examples, his influence, his exertions? What a blessing did Elkanah and Hannah prove to Israel by their training up such a child as Samuel. And what gratitude do all ages owe to his grandmother Lois, and his mother Eunice, for such a character as Timothy!

Finally. Let us regard it in reference to the *Church*. Baxter thinks that if family religion was fully discharged, the preaching of the word would not long remain the general instrument of conversion. Without being answerable for the extent of this observation, we know who hath said, "Train up a child in the way that he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." We know that among our earlier godly ancestors, religion was a kind of heir-loom, that passed by descent; and instead of the fathers were the children. Families were then the nurseries of the churches: and those who were early "planted in the house of the Lord flourished in the courts of our God, and still brought forth fruit in old age." Even the ministers of the sanctuary were commonly derived from hence; and these domestic seminaries prepared them to enter the more public institutions. And what well-defined and consistent characters did they display. And what just notions did they entertain of divine truth. And how superior were they to those teachers who, brought up in ignorance, and after a a profligate course, are suddenly converted; who, impressed before they are informed, are always in danger of extremes

or eccentricities; who hold no doctrine in its just bearings, but are carried away disproportionably by some one truth, which first caught their attention; and who often continue crude and incoherent in their notions, and illiberal and condemnatory in their sentiments, through life! *They* were not always making discoveries, but "continued in the things which they had learned, and been assured of, knowing of whom they had learned them." They were enlightened, but not dazzled. They were refreshed with divine truth, but not intoxicated. They staggered not, but kept on steady in their course; neither turning to the right hand nor to the left. They were not Antinomians: they were not Legalists. None could honour the grace of God more; but they never abused it.

Not only therefore would the churches of Christ be more filled, but better filled: and though our eye is not evil, because God is good, and so far from wishing to limit the Holy One of Israel, we rejoice in the conversion of any; we reckon, and not without much observation, that the best members and the best ministers of our churches—they who, in their conduct and in their preaching, most *adorn* the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things, are those who are brought from pious families.

III. We were to ANSWER SOME OBJECTIONS TO THE PRACTICE.

But I have been hesitating whether I should pass over this division of our subject; not only because we perceive that we must trespass on your time, but because objections can be raised easily against any doctrine, or practice. The weakest reasoners most frequently advance them; and no wise ones will ever be influenced by them. *They* will look at argument and proof; and if a principle be established by sufficient evidence, they are satisfied, even if there should be difficulties which they must leave unsolved. I will however glance at four or five things.

The *first* regards *Leisure.* "We are so much engaged, that our affairs leave us no time for these exercises." But what time do they require? And is there one of you that does not waste more time every day of his life than is expended in such devotions? And if more time be really necessary, could you not gain more? How do you manage your concerns? Could nothing be saved by more diligence

and order? At what time do you rise? Could nothing be saved from late slumberings on the bed, without any injury to health; yea, with the likelihood of improving it? If time falls short for any thing, should it not fall short for things of less moment? Is not the serving of God the "one thing needful?" And cannot he, by his grace and providence, more than indemnify you for every sacrifice you make? Is there not truth in the proverb, "There is nothing got by stealing, or lost by praying?" Are *you* more employed than David was, who presided in his council, and gave audience to ambassadors, and orders to generals—who reigned over an extensive and distracted empire? Yet he found time for domestic worship; and even on a day of peculiar activity "returned to bless his household."

The *second* regards *Capacity*. "We envy those who are qualified for such a work; but we are unable to perform it, as we wish,—and as we ought." This is perhaps the only instance in which you think and speak humbly of yourselves. But we will not accept of your voluntary humility, till we have obtained from you an answer to a few inquiries. Is it not the want of inclination you feel, rather than of ability? Have you ever fairly made the trial? Have you done every thing in your power to gain a fitness for the duty? Would not your capacity increase by exercise? Is refinement here necessary? Is not the most imperfect performance preferable to neglect? Suppose you were to do nothing more than, after reading a portion of God's word, to kneel down with your household, and address our Father who is in heaven in the words which the Saviour himself taught his own disciples? Are there not helps to family devotion of which you may avail yourselves? We prefer in this service free prayer to forms; but preference is not exclusion. We love not the contempt with which forms have been treated by some. A Baxter, a Howe, a Watts, a Doddridge, did not ridicule them as "crutches." But, admitting the justness of the depreciating figure, yet surely crutches are a help and a blessing to the lame: and we know who hath said, "Where there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not."

The *third* regards *Shame*. "We are ashamed to begin!" What! ashamed of your glory? Ashamed of following the great? Ashamed of following a David—a King, who "returned to bless his household?" Of following a Joshua,

hero, a commander, the first man in the commonwealth of Israel, who said, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!" Of following Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who made it their first care, wherever they came, to build an altar for God? Was his late Majesty ashamed always to worship God with his household morning and evening? Is there not an increasing number of persons in our own day, of high rank and nobility, who keep up, even in their establishments, a custom so laudable and useful? The shame is that you have neglected it so long, not that you are willing to begin it now. Follow the example of a man who was well known to some of us, but whose name we must suppress. He had heard the minister preach in the morning of the Sabbath on Family Worship. The very same evening, he called together his wife, and children, and servants, and apprentices; and recapitulating the arguments and motives they had heard, appealed to their reason and conscience whether they were not unanswerable and irresistible. He then said, I condemn myself for the neglect of this duty, in which I have hitherto lived: but as the best proof of repentance is practice, I will now commence it; and, by the help of God, I will omit it no more, as long as I live. Was this weakness? or moral heroism?

The *fourth* regards *false or mistaken Orthodoxy.* God forbid we should undervalue divine truth; but there is a highness in doctrine so commonly connected with lowness of conduct, that we have known not a few, whose creed has soon led to the abandonment of family worship; and it is indeed the natural tendency, not of the principles they abuse, but of their abuse of the principles.—"The Lord knoweth them that are his. And he will call them in his own due time; and make them willing in the day of his power, without our anxiety." But we are not sure of this. Our exertions may be the very means which he has appointed by which to accomplish the end. And when does he work without means? *He* gives the increase; but Paul plants, and Apollos waters—and what right have we to ask for a moral miracle, by expecting the one without the other?

"Where is the use of it? We cannot give our servants and our children grace." And why not? "If," says James, "a man err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know that he which converteth a sinner from the error of

his ways, shall save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins." Here it is supposed that *you* may save and convert. "Yes, but not meritoriously or efficiently." How then? "Why only instrumentally." We have no objection to this. Still it seems there is a sense in which *you* may do it. "Yes, under God." This again is right. We never wish to exclude him. But he *is* with us; and by prayer, we secure his assistance.

There is indeed a sense in which you cannot give grace; it is as to the success of means. But for this you are not responsible. This is the Lord's part. But what is yours? Think of another case. The husbandman cannot raise an ear of corn; but he can manure the land, and plough, and sow. And he knows this is indispensable to a crop. And how rarely does he labour in vain! If God promises to communicate his blessing in the use of means, they who refuse them have no right to complain; and they who employ them, have no reason to be discouraged.

Another—But I will answer no more of your objections. You *know* they are excuses. You *know* they are such as you will be ashamed to urge before the Judge of all. You know that your consciences are not satisfied with them even *now*.—I will, therefore, in the

IV. Place, conclude by SOME ANIMADVERSIONS AND ADMONITIONS.

And "to whom," as says the Prophet, "shall I speak and give warning?"

I must first address those who at present *are unconnected in life*. How powerfully does our subject say to such, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." This will render the performance of family religion in all cases difficult, and in many, impossible. It is lamentable enough with regard to pious individuals themselves, that while they want every kind of encouragement and assistance, they are allied to those who, instead of helping them, must oppose and injure: but it is also to be deplored, as producing partially or wholly the ruin of domestic godliness. When Peter enforces relative duties, he admits that unless we dwell "as heirs together of the grace of life," our "prayers will be hindered." How can they rule well their own house? How can they seek a godly seed, while, instead of striving together, they thus draw different ways?

and, alas! the one drawing heavenward is the least likely to be successful; the opposite attractions falling in with the depravity of human nature? For evil wants only to be seen or heard; but good must be enforced with "line upon line, and precept upon precept."

But there are those who are already in family alliance, *who are living in the neglect of family devotion.* And this is the case, I fear, with not a few. And yet you would be offended if you were called infidels—but according to the apostle you have no reason: "He that provideth not for his own, and especially those of his own house, hath denied the faith, and is *worse* than an infidel." Many of you attend regularly the public services of the sanctuary, and we love to see you in the courts of the Lord, and willing to hear his words. But if you gained good in the house of God, you would carry it away, and diffuse it in your own. Yet when you are followed home, there is no more appearance of religion in your habitations, than in houses of heathens. Heathens! forgive me this wrong. We blaspheme you by the comparison. You had, not only your gods for the country, but your household gods; which you regarded as your defenders, and guardians, and comforters; and which nothing could induce you to give up or neglect.

What can I say more? He has threatened to pour out his fury upon the nations that know him not, and upon the families that call not upon his name. But I would rather work upon your ingenuousness, than upon your fears. God has revealed himself under a *domestic* relation, and calls himself "The God of all the families of the earth." And will you refuse him in this endearing character? Will you rob yourselves and your families of your greatest mutual honour and blessedness? An angel in his intercourse with this world, sees nothing so uninviting and dreary as a house, though rich as a mansion and splendid as a palace, devoid of the service and presence of God! But what so lovely, so attractive as the family altar, "garlanded by the social feelings," and approached morning and evening by the high-priest of the domestic temple, and his train of worshippers? There the master's authority is softened, and he feels respect for the servant who is kneeling at his side, and "free indeed." There the servant's submission is sweetened, and he loves, while he obeys, a master who is praying for his welfare. Here the father, worn down with the labour

of the day, is cheered and refreshed. Here the anxious mother hushes her cares to rest. "If any thing in the day has been diverted from its course, now all finds its place, and glides along in its wonted channel. If the relative affections have declined during the day, the evening service, like the dew of heaven, revives and enlivens them. If offences have come, they are easily forgiven, when all are asking for pardon for themselves. Every angry word, every wrong temper, every petulant feeling, flies before the hallowing influence of social devotion."

I must address myself to those *who perform it.* I beseech you, brethren, "suffer the word of exhortation."—Beware of formality. God is a spirit. He looketh to the heart.—Beware of tediousness and length. "Use not vain repetitions as the heathen do; for they think they shall be heard for their much speaking." "God is in heaven, and thou upon the earth; therefore let thy words be few." God cannot be fatigued: but he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust.—Beware of lateness. When languor and drowsiness and listlessness prevail, you would bless your households more by suffering them to retire, than engaging them in services irksome to the performers, and insulting to the receiver. "If ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? Offer it now unto thy governor, will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts. But cursed be the deceiver which hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen."

I must not overlook those who *are living in religious families.* The lines have fallen to you in pleasant places: you have a godly heritage. From how many snares are you secured! What opportunities of instruction and improvement do you possess! What pious excitements, and encouragements, and aids do you enjoy! But your responsibility grows with your advantages. To you much is given. From you much will be required. For "to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." There may be wicked servants in religious families: such an one was Gehazi, who waited upon Elisha. And there may be wicked children in religious families: such an one was Ham, who called even Noah his father! But if you abuse or neglect your means and privileges, your guilt and

your condemnation will be greater than those of Pagans. "It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for you"—"there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth when ye shall see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of God, and ye yourselves shut out."

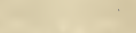
Finally, there are some who *reside in irreligious households.* You we sincerely pity. Whatever temporal advantages you enjoy, they can never compensate for your spiritual privations. How sad, and how awful, to see the Sabbath polluted; the house of God forsaken; every book read, but the Bible. To hear, instead of prayer, profane swearing, and the taking God's name in vain, instead of praise. Or, if no gross immoralities prevail, to witness, lying down and rising up, no acknowledgment of God; but a practical, if not verbal rejection of him; every thing really saying unto God, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways."

Surely such a situation, since you have known God, or rather have been known of him, has not been the object of your choice. But you may have been providentially placed here. You have perhaps been called here, being a servant; or you have been called here, being a child. Be mindful of your danger, and "watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation." Look to him who preserved saints in Cæsar's household, and Abijah in the family of Jeroboam, that he may secure you. You are much observed. Therefore walk circumspectly. Be harmless and blameless. And not only be without rebuke, but hold forth the word of life—not by stepping out of your sphere—not by talking (though a word fitly spoken, O how good is it!) but by your tempers, your behaviour, your character.

And thus you may be the instruments of introducing religion where you ought to have found it. Not only have wives thus won their husbands without the word, but servants have removed prejudices from their masters and mistresses, and induced them to attend the gospel. And thus children have conveyed religion to those from whom they ought to have derived it. "Well," said a mother, one day, weeping, her daughter being proposed as a candidate for Christian communion—"I will resist no longer. How can I bear to see my dear child love and read the Scripture, while I never look into the Bible—To see her retire, and seek God, while I never pray—To see her going to the

Lord's table, while his death is nothing to me."—"Ah!" said she, to the minister who had called to inform her of her daughter's desire—wiping her eyes—"Yes, Sir, I know she is right, and I am wrong. I have seen her firm under reproach, and patient under provocation, and cheerful in all her sufferings. When in her late illness she was looking for her dissolution, heaven stood in her face.—O! that I was as fit to die! I ought to have taught her; but I am sure she has taught me. How can I bear to see her joining the church of God, and leaving me behind—perhaps for ever!" From that hour she prayed in earnest, that the God of her child would be her God, and was soon seen walking in company with her in the way everlasting. Is this mere supposition? More than one eye in reading this allusion, will drop a testimony to the truth of it. "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen." May God bless us, and make us blessings! Amen.

LECTURE IV.



THE CHRISTIAN, IN THE CHURCH.

"*Thou that mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the House of God, which is the Church of the living God.*"—1 Tim. iii. 15.

The connexions of life are many and various: and they have all their appropriate claims and advantages. Some of these relations are natural; some civil; some commercial; some intellectual and literary. But the most important of all alliances are those of a religious quality. The bonds of these are not flesh and blood; but faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. These regard the spirit in man; and fall under the power of the world to come. All other connexions have their sphere only in this life; but these aspire after "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." All other unions, however firm, or however tender, having answered the destinations of Providence, will be dissolved by death; but though Christians die, *they* are still related. The separation between them is only *temporary;* a period of re-union will assuredly and speedily arrive. Yea, it is only *partial;* even now—

"The saints below, and all the dead,
But one communion make;
All join in Christ their living head,
And of his grace partake."

You are to view the Christian, this morning,

In the Church.

In this state Timothy was when Paul addressed him in the words which we have chosen for our motto—"*Thou that mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the House of God, which is the Church of the living God.*"—

Him, it is true, he addressed as a minister; and his official station demanded a line of conduct becoming it. But every Christian has a place to fill and a part to act in the church of God; and he needs to be informed and admonished concerning it.—Let us,

I. Explain the CONDITION OUR SUBJECT SUPPOSES.
II. The OBLIGATIONS WE ARE UNDER TO ENTER IT.
III. The DUTIES WHICH ARISE OUT OF IT.

I. The CONDITION OUR SUBJECT SUPPOSES.

Now when we speak of the Christian's being in *the Church*, it is necessary to observe two acceptations of the word in the Scripture, as well as in common discourse.

It is sometimes used to comprise *all the redeemed and sanctified people of God.* These, in every age, in every country, under every dispensation, whether Patriarchal, Jewish, or Evangelical; all these, whether residing in earth, or in heaven; all these constitute one church. And of this we read, when it is said, "The church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." "We are come to the church of the first-born." "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it." "That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." However distinguished from each other, all *real* Christians, "who worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh," belong to *this* church; and to be found in it, is an unspeakable privilege, and constitutes what we mean by "the communion of saints" in the Apostle's Creed—a mutual participation in all their work, honour, and blessedness. But it is not of *this* we now speak. This is the church universal; and in this we are necessarily found, as soon as ever we are chosen and called out of the world.

But the word much more frequently means *a particular community, or company of believers associated together for religious purposes.* This coincides with the language of the nineteenth Article—"A Church is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments are duly administered according to Christ's ordinance in all things that of necessity are requisite to the same." In conformity with this, we read of "the messengers," not of the Church—but "of the

Churches:" not of the Church—but "the Churches which were in Christ." And thus we read of "the seven Churches which are in Asia:" of "the Churches which were in Galatia;" and of "the Churches throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria:" and what they were may be inferred from their "walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comforts of the Holy Ghost, and being multiplied." Thus, too, we read of "the Church at Philippi," and "the Church at Colosse," and so of the rest.

In advancing further, nothing would be more easy than to furnish matter for dispute. My object, however, is not controversial, but practical. It does not require me to undertake the task of attempting to determine the particular form of a Christian Church, or the precise mode of administering divine ordinances in it; but only to show, that it is the duty of a Christian to be found in a Church-state; giving up himself not only to the Lord, but to his people by the will of God; and walking with those who profess to continue steadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine, and in fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayer.

Yet there are some who have here, we will not call them their arguments, but their excuses. To such union, they prefer rambling, or at least detachment. They fix no where, or at least commune no where. No church is wide enough, or strict enough, or pure enough, or sound enough, for them: no one is completely modified to their taste. Constantine said to such a self-conceited Christian, "Take a ladder, and climb to heaven by thyself." If all were like-minded with some, there would be no such thing as a Church on earth.

I am aware of what I shall incur from certain quarters; but I shall deliver myself with the firmness of conviction. It is not necessary that we should approve of every opinion or usage among those with whom we connect ourselves. It is far better in lesser matters, if we have faith, to have it to ourselves before God; and to exercise forbearance and self-denial, rather than for the sake of some trifling difference, to endeavour to originate a new party, or remain destitute of the benefits, and violating the obligations of social Christianity. We should guard against an *undue* attachment to any particular scheme of Church policy, when, though the abettors profess to be governed by the Scripture only, and consider every iota of their system as perfectly clear and binding; others, more numerous than themselves,

and equally wise and good, and entitled to the leading of the Spirit of Truth, draw a very different conclusion from the same premises. Mr. Newton, speaking of the several systems under which, as so many banners, the different denominations of Christians are ranged, observes, "That there is usually something left out, which ought to have been taken in, and something admitted of supposed advantage, unauthorised by the Scripture standard. A Bible-Christian, therefore, will see much to approve in a *variety* of forms and parties: the providence of God may lead and fix him in a more immediate connexion with some *one* of them; but his spirit and affection will not be confined within these *narrow* enclosures. He insensibly borrows and unites that which is excellent in *each*, perhaps without knowing how far he agrees with them, because he finds all in the written word." With regard to myself, though I have a preference, and attach *comparative* importance to the things wherein pious men differ, yet there is no body of Christians, holding the Head, with whom I could not hold communion; and to whom I would not join myself, if circumstances withheld me from my own denomination, rather than remain a religious *solitaire*.

It will be, I presume, committing an unpardonable sin with bigots, when I express my persuasion, after all I have read of the claims, whether Episcopalian, or Presbyterian, or Independent, to the *only* scriptural standard, that there is no *very* definite plan of Church Government laid down in the new Testament; so that while one mode is canonized, every other is absolutely wrong. Deviation from prescribed orders is sinful; but where there is no law, there is no transgression. "As oft," says the Apostle, "as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come:" now had he told us *how* often we are to do this, we must observe such times only, or oppose the will of God. Is it so now the thing is left undecided? May there not be a difference in the frequency of its observance, without sin? It is otherwise with the recurrence of the Sabbath: this is determined both by command and example. It would have been criminal in Moses not to have made the snuffers of pure gold; or the holy oil of a mixture of certain ingredients; or the priest's robe of such a quality, such a colour, and such a length: for he had express instructions to do so, and the pattern of every thing was shown him in the Mount. But in what mount has our model of circum-

stantial regulation been exhibited? What Moses received it? Where do we find a particularity of detail in the Gospels of the Evangelists; or in the Acts, and Epistles of the Apostles? Where do we find many of the materials of angry debate and exclusiveness which have occupied so much time, and spoiled so much temper, in the system of Christianity?—A system designed for every nation, and people, and kindred, and tongue—a system too sublime in its aim to lose itself in minuteness—too anxious to unite its followers in great matters, to magnify little ones—too truly noble, not to be condescending—too tender, not to be tolerant—too impartial, not to say to its subjects, receive one another as Christ also has received you; you that are strong, bear the infirmities of the weak, and not please yourselves.

Now we do not pretend to say, that all who do not thus enter a Christian church are not in a state of grace. Some, after they are converted, may not have the opportunity. Some are repulsed by the rigidness of admission: they cannot pronounce every Shibboleth of a confession; or express their belief of the divinity of every part of the discipline.—These are to be pitied: the *blame* lies with the executors of such righteousness. Some, otherwise disposed to come forward, are held back by a sense of unworthiness, or a dread of hypocrisy, or a fear of causing "the way of truth to be evil spoken of," by their acting unbecoming the Gospel. These are to be instructed and encouraged.

But after these concessions, we make no scruple to say, that if a Christian does not belong to a Christian church, he is not walking according to God's appointment, and the order of the Gospel; but is living in the loss of privilege, and the omission of duty. It was not thus with the Christians of whom we have accounts in the New Testament. They are represented not as wandering sheep, but a flock having a shepherd and a fold. Not as stones loose and scattered on the ground, but built up a spiritual house. Not as separate and solitary plants and trees, but as a vineyard, a garden watched and watered. Not as rovers and vagrants, in the highways and hedges—but as "fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."—This brings us to consider,

II. THE OBLIGATIONS WE ARE UNDER TO ENTER THIS STATE.

Let us notice four articles—*Suitability*—*Consolation*—*Safety*—and *Usefulness*.

The first claim is derived from *Suitability*. This state accords with the very constitution of man. He is not only a rational, but a social creature: and so natural are his social feelings, that they can only be rooted up with his very being. Religion, therefore, does not aim to destroy or injure these propensions; but it sanctifies them. It opens a new sphere for their developement. It presents new objects of interest and attachment.

Like attracts like; and when we become godly, our longing is for godly association. Then we pray; "Be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto them that love thy name:" then, we confess, "I am a companion of them that fear thee:" then, "we take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, we will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you:" then, we "choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." These fall in with our new views, and hopes, and fears, and joys, and sorrows. These are now our new fellow-learners, fellow-travellers, fellow-labourers, fellow-warriors—yea, whosoever now, doeth the will of our Father who is in heaven, the same is our brother and sister and mother.

Saul, therefore, upon his conversion, assayed to join himself to the disciples: and every one, when he falls under the same influence, will be like-minded with him. It would be strange indeed, if when we turn away from the vain and the wicked, we should find ourselves in a state of destitution and abandonment. But God has expressly provided against this repulsion of loneliness. We do not become outcasts. He takes us up. "Wherefore," says he, "come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and be a father unto you; and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." Ye shall not be homeless and friendless. I will place you in my family. You shall have better relations than those you have resigned; and more valuable connections than those who have renounced you. When you part with the world, you enter the church, and this is more glorious than all the mountains of prey. You rise in rank; and so far from being losers, "Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left his house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my

sake, and the Gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life."—We, therefore,

Derive the second claim from *Consolation.* This is the law of Christ: as we "have opportunity, let us do good unto all men; but especially unto them that are of the household of faith." Their members, therefore, have the first claim upon a Christian Church for sympathy and succour. And the privilege arising from hence will appear to be the greater, when it is considered, that the discharge of this duty does not depend upon obligation only. Christians feel themselves disposed, as well as bound to this good work. Their principles lead them to "rejoice with them that do rejoice," and to "weep with them that weep." And is it nothing to belong to a community, who, instead of envying and hating you for your successes, and endowments, and comforts,—it is so always with the world—will glorify God on your behalf? Is it nothing to be connected with those who feel it to be their duty and their privilege to guard your reputation, to explore your wants, to soften your cares, to sooth your sorrows; and where, not only the minister and the office-bearers, but all the members, will visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction, and comfort them that are cast down?

The poor and the needy are too generally overlooked, not to say despised by the world; and from the treatment they receive from others, there is danger of their feeling a kind of self-degradation that makes them regardless of their conduct. But here they have a name and a place. Here they feel an importance, that while it raises them morally, does not injure them in their civil dependence. Here their elevation does not draw them off from their stations; but improves them for every relative duty, by producing self-respect, and augmenting a sense of responsibility. Here their fellow-members, above them in condition, can without envy or uneasiness see their equality with themselves, or even their pre-eminence in experience. "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted; but the rich, in that he is made low, because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away."

The church is the only society in which it is either possible or proper to merge the ranks of life. Temporal things divide men, and keep them separate; and they have always

a tendency to carry to excess those distinctions which are allowable, and even necessary. However disposed towards each other, the small and the great cannot unite in secular friendship. The master and the servant cannot consort together either in the upper or the lower room. The peasant and the nobleman cannot inhabit the same cottage, or the same mansion. The noble and the vulgar cannot feed together, either at the dinner of herbs or at the stalled ox. But here they all surround the same table. Here all eat the same spiritual meat, and drink the same spiritual drink. Here the rich and the poor meet together. Here all are partakers of the same common salvation. Here all are one in Christ Jesus. Here every disadvantage is compensated. "Also the sons of the stranger that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people."

Safety furnishes a third claim. For it is not to be overlooked that this state fortifies individuals against the influence of example, and number, and ridicule, and reproach. It will be allowed that a man ought to do what is right, if no one stands by him. Yet singularity is sometimes a great trial; and to brave all the consequences, in many cases, requires more moral heroism than is always possessed even by one that is upright and sincere. But when he stands in connection with others; when he sees himself countenanced and supported by those he deems wiser and better than himself; this gives him confidence and courage; and he resembles a soldier who advances boldly with his comrades, when he would hesitate and falter alone. "Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but wo to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him: and a threefold cord is not quickly broken."

Indecision is as perilous as it is uncomfortable. And therefore the Apostle says, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." For while the enemy sees you unfixed and hesitating, he yet hopes to succeed, and this protracts his endeavours: whereas when he finds you determined, he

desponds, and departs. How many temptations are cut off, as soon as we cease to halt between two opinions, and proclaim ourselves to be on the Lord's side. And how much circumspection is also hereby induced. He who makes no pretences to a thing, is not judged by it; but a profession of religion is of great value, as it tends to check what is evil, and to bind us to what is righteous, by subjecting us to self-reproach and the censure of others, when we act inconsistently. "Does this temper or conduct become a member of the Church of Christ? Do I wear his livery, and disown him? Have I opened my mouth to the Lord, and can I go back? Are not the eyes of many upon me? And have they not a right to ask, what do ye more than others?"

And let me put it to your conscience, whether this be not one of the reasons which operate to keep you out of the church. Ye feel yourselves now in a larger place. You have more liberty. You can do your own ways, and find your own pleasures, and speak your own words, on God's holy day. Your tongues are your own: who is Lord over you? And—"I do not profess to be a saint," seems an excuse to prevent or silence all the qualms of the sinner. "I know not," says Doddridge, "a more dreadful mark of destruction upon a man, than a fear to be under an obligation to avoid what is evil, and to cleave to that which is good." A man properly concerned for his spiritual and everlasting welfare, would feel every assistance, every excitement, every motive, in such an important course, a privilege: and such a privilege constitutes a powerful argument on behalf of a church relation.

Therefore it has a fourth claim. It is *Usefulness*. How much more is a man's zeal drawn forth as soon as he has declared himself in any cause; and he partakes of the spirit of the party. When his vote is solicited for a candidate at the time of an election, though he feels scarcely a preference before, yet as soon as he has avowed himself for either of the applicants, his indifference is destroyed, his fervour is excited, and he is carried along with the proceedings, until he is intensely interested; and his happiness or misery seems suspended on the success. Indeed, whatever we keep concealed within, is likely to lose some of its hold upon us: it is by speaking of it, by pushing it forward, by acting constantly upon it, that we feel more of its impression and influence.

But there is another view to be taken of the subject. We all know how much is to be done by union, even when the parts are inconsiderable in themselves. Thus sands make the mountains. The cable that holds the ship in the storm is composed of threads. A single soldier that has missed his way, may chance-wise do some little good; but he is efficient only as acting with a corps; and the war requires an army. If the liberal soul *deviseth* liberal things, how are good schemes to be carried *into effect*, and how are useful institutions to be *supported*, but by union and co-operation? How much does one Christian society accomplish by its collective wisdom, and benevolence, and exertion! Why are the churches called candlesticks, but because they are instruments, holding forth and diffusing the light of life?

The public worship of God ought always to be considered as an unspeakable benefit to mankind. Amidst the cares and toils and distresses of life, "God is known in his palaces for a refuge." He is "the Father of the fatherless, and the Husband of the widow, in his holy habitation." There the tempted are succoured; and the weak strengthened; and the wandering directed. The sanctuary opens a door for the weary traveller to enter and refresh himself. It awakens, by its administrations, the curiosity of the thoughtful, and the attention of the careless; and how often have those who came from no pious motive, been known of all, judged of all, and compelled to exclaim, God is in the midst of them of a truth. While we are anxious for more success to attend the means of grace, we are not aware of the extent and the degree in which they *are* useful. What an injury would be sustained in a neighbourhood, if they were given up!

But it is by *churches* that the ministry of the word and the ordinances of religion are supported and dispensed; and by their means the system of conversion and edification is continued and perpetuated. Individuals die; but thus, as some are removed, others are added. Thus member succeeds member, and pastor succeeds pastor; and, as in the case of a river, change leaves sameness, and permanency is produced by succession.—But we have,

III. To consider THE DUTIES ARISING FROM THE STATE.

These are various, as well as important. They relate, *First*, to the *Worship*. This a Christian will value as

the appointment of Him, who knowing what is in man, ordains what is necessary to him, and delights in the prosperity of his servants. When, therefore, he says, "Seek ye my face," his heart answers, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek." And as he obeys from love, he will never exclaim, "what a weariness is it to serve the Lord; when will the Sabbath be gone!" He calls the Sabbath a delight, and the holy of the Lord, honourable. He loves the habitation of his house. He finds his word and eats it; and it is to him the joy and the rejoicing of his heart. If others can dispense with ordinances, he never rises above his need of them. He feels that something is still wanting to his knowledge, his graces, his comfort; and though he holds communion with God habitually, and wishes in all his ways to acknowledge him, he sees what an adaptation there is in the means of grace to afford him relief and assistance. His own experience stimulates him,—for he has seen his power and glory in the sanctuary; while the promise justifies his most enlarged expectation—"In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee." "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint."

Cases of prevention will sometimes occur; but he will take heed that they are not excuses. And, as he would not love and serve the creature more than the Creator, he will see that the hindrances are such as would keep him from all other engagements. And if they can be removed by order and skill and diligence in his affairs; or by a little expense in conveyance, saved from vanity and excess, he will remove them. And when the sick relation, or his own bed of languishing, or the painful accident, detains him at home, he will feel himself the prisoner of the Lord, and say, with the royal exile, "When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me; for I had gone with the multitude; I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday." I never believe those, who, turning their back upon the temple, tell us that they pass their time in retired devotion. One duty pleads for another, and prepares for another, and helps another. It is the same with neglect: we may infer one omission from another. It is very questionable too, when they tell us, that the preacher can teach them no more than they know already. It is the remark of Caryl, that

"he who will learn of none but himself, is sure to have a fool for *his* master." Besides, novelty of information is not the only or principal object in attending the house of God: but as Judge Hale said, with regard to himself, "to be impressed and affected; and to have old and known truth reduced to experience and practice."

He therefore regards the means of grace *constantly*. He attends not one part of the Sabbath only, but both parts: and surely two public services cannot be too much for a day dedicated to devotion. Nor will he attend on the Sabbath only, but on the week-day also. He will be thankful for a service which refreshes and nerves his mind amidst the cares and toils of his calling; and he will remember that, as a professor of religion, he has stipulated for his regular attendance, by his joining the church to which he belongs. Nothing can be more painful to the feelings of a minister, when he comes to water his flock, than to find many of them not at the well. Perhaps, too, he has chosen his subject, and studied it, and prayed over it with a peculiar reference to the individual then absent. And how often has something been delivered in the absence of that individual, singularly appropriate to his condition or experience; something that might have directed and comforted him to the end of life, and have been remembered in death with pleasure. And thus neglect has been punished with regret.

But you are required to attend the means of divine appointment *spiritually*. Ye are not to think it enough to draw nigh to him with the mouth, and honour him with the lip, while the heart is far from him. The Lord looketh to the heart. There is such a thing as an attendance on ordinances, when there is no attention in them; at least, none that comes up to the demand, to "worship in spirit and in truth."

And as Paul may plant and Apollos water, but God alone can give the increase, we must attend, in *humbleness* of mind, and never without *prayer*, that the Spirit may help our infirmities, and render the means available to our profit. When the preacher enters upon his work in such an assembly as this, "it is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed:"—And,

Secondly, these duties regard the *minister*, who is placed over you in the Lord. Add not to his difficulties. He has his trials as a man; and he has his trials as a Christian; and in addition to both these, he has trials peculiar to his

office. Could he have foreseen all at the beginning, he would have been disheartened at the entrance; but his work is like John's little book, a bitter sweet, and the sweet comes first. You find it hard enough to manage one temper; what must be the task of governing a multitude, including every diversity! After the engagement of years, he would yield to many a temptation to withdraw, but that necessity is laid upon him. Never successful according to his wishes, and sometimes apparently useless, he is often ready to lay down his commission at his Master's feet; to say, "I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain." Bound to engage at the times appointed, and knowing what is expected from him; in his perplexity arising from choice of subjects, in his barrenness of thought, in his unfitness of feeling, in the study which is a weariness to the flesh, and the exhaustion of spirits gendered by intense application; his heart knoweth his own bitterness; death worketh in him, but life in you. Encourage him. Welcome his instructions. Yield to his reproofs. Respect that authority which he has received, not for destruction, but edification. "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account; that they may do it with joy, and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you."

A minister must be very mean-spirited if he regards his salary as alms or benefactions from his people. What they give, they more than have out in services; and "the labourer is worthy of his hire." Has not God ordained, that they who preach the Gospel, should live of the Gospel? And is not this law founded in equity and justice? Would not the same talents the man devotes to the service of the sanctuary, provide for himself and his family, if employed in secular concerns? This is a delicate point for a minister to handle; and he surely would never bring it forward if he could do justice to the part of the subject before us, without it. But he will resign it as soon as possible; and leave it in the words the Holy Ghost teacheth. Let congregations compare themselves with it; and especially those individuals in them who pay more annually to the most menial of their attendants, than to the shepherd of their souls; while others, with all their commendation, never confer upon him one token of respect in their lives.

"Let him," says the Apostle, "be with you without fear." And again: "Know them that labour among you,

and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." He means not only in reward of their work, but in *aid* of it: for unless you *magnify* his office, you are not likely to be *impressed* by it; and as your regard *for* the preacher declines, so will your profit *by* him. Your relation to him is such, that, if he is degraded, you are disgraced in him; and if he is honoured, you share in his respectability. Ministers are men; and "the best of men are but men at the best." You are not required to approve of their infirmities, or even to be ignorant of them; but surely you will not be suspicious; you will not invite or welcome reflection and insinuation; nor, like too many, speak of him or suffer him to be spoken of, before children and servants and strangers, with a levity and freedom, far from being adapted to increase or preserve esteem and respect. You will consider his character not only as forming his crown, but as essential to his acceptance and success. "Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness: and hold such in reputation."

Thirdly, these duties respect *your fellow-members*. They are all comprehended in love: and you are required to "love one another out of a pure heart fervently;" "to love as brethren." Has a fellow Christian erred? "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart; thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him." Has he been overtaken in a fault? "Ye that are spiritual, are to restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering yourselves lest you also be tempted." Is he declining in zeal, and negligent in duty? You are "to consider him, to provoke him to love and to good works." Is he oppressed? You are to "bear his burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." Is he in want? You are to give him such things as are needful. "Now," says the Apostle, "we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men."

Fourthly, your duty concerns the welfare and prosperity of the *whole interest*. Not that you are to be exclusively attentive to your *own* community. You are unfit to be a member of *any* Christian church unless you can say, "grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." But our conditions and circumstances must regu-

late not the principle, but the exercises and the expressions of duty. The private affections are not incompatible with the public, but conduct to them; and the way, the best way, the only way, by which we can promote the good of the whole, is by advancing the good of a part. The man who, in opposing patriotism, pleads that the world is his country, and all mankind his fellow-citizens, has no country, no fellow-citizens. The object for which he pretends to be concerned is too indistinct to impress, too distant to approach, too extensive to grasp. To come nearer. If a man were to disregard his family, under pretence that he was acting on a broader, nobler principle, and for an object less selfish and contracted, even the nation at large; he would soon be told that the nation consists of families; that one of these is committed to his care; that this he *can* improve; that this he *ought* peculiarly to regard, even for the sake of the public. "He that provideth not for his own, especially those of his own house, hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." It is much the same here. It is the will of God that we feel a special sympathy with the religious society to which we belong. This demands our immediate attention, and efforts, and sacrifices; and all the members in their respective places, and by all the influences they can employ, should seek to excel to the edifying of the church.

Now the first thing that seems to strike us with regard to the prosperity of a cause is the *increase* of its members. There is, however, one kind of accession which a church should not value nor seek after. It is the drawing members from other churches, where they already hear "the truth as it in Jesus," and enjoy the fellowship of the gospel. We do nothing in filling one place, by emptying another, where the same work is carrying on. The transferring of soldiers from one regiment into another, does not increase the king's army, or add to the defence of the country. The thing is to gain fresh recruits. Our aim should be to make converts, not proselytes. But it is delightful when the inquiry is often made, What shall we do to be saved?—when sinners are turned from darkness unto light, and the power of Satan unto God: when Zion, surprised at the quality and number of her sons and daughters, exclaims, "Who hath begotten me these? these, where have they been?"—and the Lord adds to the Church daily such as shall be saved.

But *harmony* is included in the welfare of a church. It

can only edify itself in love. "For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace."

It takes in also *purity*. "Therefore," says the Prophet, "keep peace and truth:" and, says the Apostle, "speaking the *truth* in love." The Church of Ephesus is commended for not bearing them that are evil. Our concern for the sanctity of our communion is to appear in maintaining godly discipline: in not admitting irreligious characters, whatever recommendations they may otherwise possess; and in excluding them when they discover themselves to be ungodly after they have been admitted. Improper individuals will occasionally enter the church: there is no preventing it, unless we were omniscient. But we cannot search the heart; and our learning ought always to be on the side of charity: it is better to be mistaken and deceived, than to be suspicious and censorious, or to destroy one for whom Christ died. But when the mask under which the man entered is shifted aside, and his conduct appears sinful, "put away from among you," says the Scripture, "that wicked person." He disgraces you; and he will contaminate—"a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump!"

Some Christians not only individually but collectively do not sufficiently think upon and pursue, "whatsoever things are lovely and of good report." A church may be austere and harsh and forbidding; but much of its usefulness depends upon its amiableness. And this will arise from its character for benevolence, and public spirit, and liberality; from its joining, with firmness of adherence to essential truth, latitude in things circumstantial; from its tenderness in receiving the weak, but not to doubtful disputations; from its readiness to receive all as Christ has received us, to the glory of God.

Towards this prosperity every member should aim and labour to contribute, by his prayers, his conversation, his example, his temper, his influence. And a church thus flourishing, increasing with all the increase of God, in number, and peace, and sanctity, and every moral excellency, is the noblest sight on earth; and full of attraction, and impression; and "a spectacle to the world, to angels,

and to men;" it looks forth as the morning, clear as the moon, bright as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.—Let us conclude.

First, we have been speaking of those that are within. But there are some who are yet *without*, whose condition we lament, and to whom we therefore would address the language of inquiry and invitation, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; why tarriest thou without?" And where do we find these? We find them among *you*, whose character and conduct are irreproachable, who constantly attend the preaching of the cross, who are glad when they say unto you, Let us go into the house of the Lord; who have even the worship of God in your families: and are not strangers to your closets—and yet keep aloof from the table of the Lord, where with his dying breath he is saying, "Do this in remembrance of me." We find them amongst those of you who so often remain as spectators at the holy solemnity, and looking down upon the privileged partakers, sigh and say, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!"—yet are restrained from approaching, not by carnality but timidity; and by forgetting that "all the fitness He requireth is to feel your need of him." We find them among you, my young friends; you, who are shunning the paths of the destroyer; you, whose consciences are awake, whose hearts are tender, whose minds are impressed by divine things,—and who are detained by looking for a change too sudden and too sensible; and for a kind and degree of evidence and assurance by no means necessary.

People talk of the young, and seem to require more satisfaction with regard to them, than with regard to older candidates. But wherefore? Do persons grow more simple and open and undesigning as they advance in life? Who are the members by whom churches have been troubled and disgraced? Not these who joined themselves to the Lord young, and very young too. I never knew a minister who had to repent of encouraging such communicants. And how many youths have I known, who, humanly speaking, would have been excellent and useful characters now, but they were not encouraged, when, as our Saviour says, they were not far from the kingdom of God. Their foot was on the threshold of conversion; but no one took them by the hand, to draw them in—but there were enough ready to draw them back: the world laid hold of them; or their con-

victions, for want of cherishing, died away. Some of them are now sitting in the seat of the scornful; others, though not the victims of error and vice, are in a state of indifference with regard to the holy communion, which is likely to continue for life. Whereas, had they entered the church when there was nothing to justify their refusal, they would have been decided; their return into the world would have been cut off; they would have felt identified with a peculiar people; their impressions would have been formed into principles and habits; and the whole man would have been changed from glory to glory as by the Spirit of the Lord.

My young friends, hesitate, we beseech you, no longer. Fulfil ye our joy in verifying the promise, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses. One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel."

Then will your peace be as a river. You will gain all the succours your age and your condition require. You will become examples to others, in the same period of life: and the young love to follow the young. Your usefulness, early commenced, will advance with your character, and influence, and years: and planted so soon in the house of the Lord, you will flourish in the courts of our God, and bring forth fruit in old age.

Many of you are the children of religious parents. How are they now praying that my attempt to bring you to a decision may be effectual! See you not the tears now dropping from the cheek of thy father—thy mother—at thy side; while each says, "if thy heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine." Some of us can speak from experience. We only recommend what we have exemplified. We were enabled early to dedicate ourselves unto God; and we have found his yoke easy and his burden light. We have found his ways pleasantness and peace. We have found "godliness profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." And, next to the salvation of our souls, we daily praise him for an early conversion. "I bless thee, O God, for many things," says Beza in his will and testament, "but especially that I gave up myself to thee at the early age of sixteen."

Wait then no longer. Be encouraged by the assurance, "I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me." If the flower be not blown, offer the bud—

> "The flower, when offered in the bud,
> Is no mean sacrifice"

in his account. And through all the changes of life, and from the borders of the grave, he will honour this surrender, and say, "I remember thee the kindness of thy youth."

Secondly, we see that while Christianity expects us to enter the church, it does not leave us to ourselves in it, but accompanies us with its social obligations, and requires us to be found in the performance of every part of relative duty. Unless you cultivate the principles and dispositions pertaining to the condition, you have no right to its benefits. Unless you bring forth fruit in the vineyard, you are cumberers of the ground. If in the master's house, you are unprofitable, you are wicked servants. Here, as every where else in religion, privilege and duty go together. You had therefore better resign your connection with the church, if you are blanks in it. How much more if you are blots! Your relation to the body of Christ stamps upon you a sacred character. It produces a responsibility peculiarly awful. As professors of his religion, you are witnesses for God: and you depose by your actions, as well as by your words—and will you bear a false or a defective testimony? You are charged individually with a portion of the glory of the Redeemer; and will you not be concerned to carry it unsullied to the grave?

Beware, therefore, lest by any temper or carriage you should cause the adversaries of the Lord to blaspheme, and the way of truth to be evil spoken of. Do not sadden the heart, and slacken the hands of your minister. Do not prove a grief to the strong, and a stumbling-block to the weak among your brethren: but "make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed." "Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the

Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice." Thus you will be harmless and blameless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life.

Even then, you may not escape censure and reproach. But you will not be buffetted for your faults; and therefore may take it patiently. They will find nothing whereof to accuse you, but in the law of your God. You will suffer for righteousness' sake, for well-doing, as Christians: and then you need not be ashamed, but rejoice that you are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye also may rejoice with exceeding joy.

Thirdly, we may learn that while we are under obligation to make a profession of religion, and come to the table of communion, the Lord's Supper is not a passport to heaven; and a connexion with a visible church does not prove our belonging to the invisible. The form of godliness is becoming, and useful, and necessary, as the dress of godliness: but it is nothing, it is worse than nothing, as a substitute for the reality. For, in this case, there is the *utmost* familiarity with divine things; and this prevents, this destroys their impressiveness. The very position of the man screens conscience from alarm, while the terrors of the Lord are addressed to those that are *without:* and as, by his assumption of the character, he passes for a Christian, and is so treated by the world and by his brethren, and is so addressed and encouraged and comforted by the minister, he is in danger of taking it for granted that he is such—when the end of these things is death. "For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?" He may be discovered and exposed in life; and if not, his name and his place in the church will soon avail him nothing. The privileges he has enjoyed, instead of affording him any security, will aggravate the awfulness of his condemnation. He not only perishes "from the way," but from the holy hill of Zion—from the sanctuary of God. He falls, at the foot of the altar. He drops into hell, from the table of the Lord, and with the sacred symbols of his body and his blood in his hand and in his mouth. The house of God, in which he pretended to worship; the pew in which he trifled so many hours away, in hearing the word

only; the pulpit, and the form of the man of God exerting himself in it; the chalice that never trembled in his unworthy hand—these will be the most dreadful images that will present themselves to the eye of his lost mind. The truths he professed to believe and recommend; the sacred exercises in which he engaged, with those who call on the name of the Lord; his favourite psalms and hymns in which he so often mocked him with "a solemn sound upon a thoughtless tongue;" his sitting to hear, and to judge of the qualification of candidates; his joining with the church in reproving, suspending, excommunicating other members with all the grimace of feigned sanctity and zeal—this will be the food of the worm that never dies, and the fire that never shall be quenched.

Yet in some cases, it would apppear that the extent and the continuance of religious delusion may be as wonderful, as the detection will be tremendous. "When once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know ye not whence ye are; then shall ye begin to say"—Not know *us?* Why, "We have *eaten* and *drunk* in thy *presence*, and thou hast *taught* in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last."

"But, beloved, we hope better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak." You are poor in spirit. You mourn for sin. You hunger and thirst after righteousness. You love his salvation, and you love his service. You glory in his cross, and you admire his character, and long to bear the image of the heavenly. Yet you are often ready to shrink back: you often, you always pray, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Well, be assured of this, that you are more welcome to his house, than you ever feel yourselves to be unworthy. He

himself rises up, and in all the freeness and tenderness of his love, invites you to his table; and cries, "Eat, O friends; drink you, drink abundantly, O beloved!"

And we, *fourthly*, conclude by hailing those who are not only members of a Christian church, but are joined to the Lord, and are of one spirit with him. Not resting in the outward and visible sign, you realize the inward and spiritual grace. You discern the Lord's body; and, by the exercise of faith on the Sacrifice of the cross, your experience tells you that his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed. You have a joy in divine things which mere professors and formalists know nothing of. How often, in his word and ordinances, do you sit under his shadow with delight, and find his fruit sweet to your taste. How often, when lying down in green pastures, and feeding beside the still waters, do you exclaim, "Oh! how great is his beauty, and how great is his goodness." While the men of the world consider you as enslaved by superstition, you walk at liberty, because you keep his commandments. While they represent you as given up to dulness and melancholy, you can look them in the face, and say,

"The men of grace have found
Glory begun below;
And heavenly fruits on earthly ground
From faith and hope may grow.

"The hill of Zion yields
A thousand sacred sweets,
Before we reach the heavenly fields,
Or walk the golden streets."

Yes, you are already blessed. But what a prospect is before you! Death has been called a going home—but it is going to church—going from the church below to the church above. Your communion on earth has its trials. It is a mixed state of things; and owing to the apostacies of some, and the backslidings of others, and the infirmities of all, you are often sorrowful for the solemn assembly, and the reproach of it is a burden. Yet it is a pleasing emblem, an earnest of the fellowship of heaven; but its defects, as well as its excellencies, should lead you to aspire after that world where the Canaanite will be no more in the house of the Lord for ever; and where the spirits of just men are made perfect. "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the

throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

Ah! Christian, though you will soon change your place, you will not change your associates. When death lets you go, you will return to your own company. Now were you setting off for a country which you had never seen, would it not be very relieving to think that you would find yourself at home there—many of your connexions being there already—and the rest assuredly coming after? If, Christian, you are at present a stranger to the heavenly world, the heavenly world is not a stranger to you. There is your Father. There is your Saviour. There are the angels who have been your ministering spirits. There are all the saints, your brethren in Christ. There are your dear friends and fellow worshippers, who have preceded you—while those you leave behind are loosening and preparing to follow.

And can you imagine that your religious acquaintance will not be renewed, and your holy intimacies be completed, there? "I am fully persuaded," says Baxter, "that I shall love my friends in heaven, and therefore know them. And this principally binds me to them on earth. And if I thought I should never know them more, nor therefore love them after death, I should love them comparatively little, as I do all other transitory objects. But I now delight in conversing with them, as believing I shall commune with them for ever." Paul was like-minded. "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy."

LECTURE V.

THE CHRISTIAN, IN THE WORLD.

"*And now I am no more in the world but these are in the world.*"—John xvii. 11.

According to Isaiah, it is a privilege to "hear a word behind us, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when we turn to the right hand, and when we turn to the left." Truth and safety lie in the middle. The Pilgrim, ascending the Hill Difficulty, saw a lion on the right hand, and a lion on the left; and was afraid to advance. But he was informed by a voice from above, that these lions were chained; and need only alarm those who approached the sides of the road. The middle was perfectly secure; and keeping in this, though these creatures might look and roar at him, they could not hurt. This is another instance of the profound truth as well as genius with which Bunyan describes things in his exquisitely simple and admired book. The wisest of men but gives us the same fact, when he represents Wisdom as saying, "I lead in the way of righteousness, in the *midst* of the paths of judgment." The sentiment may be exemplified in every thing moral and religious. Economy is equally remote from profusion and parsimony. Courage stands between rashness and fear. Patience is equally destroyed by feeling too little or too much: for which reason we are forbidden both to despise the chastening of the Lord, and to faint when we are rebuked of him. The evils to be avoided in all these cases come so near together, that "narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

Let us take this general reflection, and apply it to a particular case. Our Lord said to his disciples—"I have chosen you out of the world." "Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." And they cannot remember and feel this too powerfully; not only when they assume a

profession of religion, but in every stage of their subsequent progress. But though their inheritance is above, their residence is below. Though they are bound for glory, they are now strangers and pilgrims on the earth. Though they are not *of* the world, they are *in* it. "I am no more," says the Saviour, "in the world, but *these are in the world.*"

They are in the world, in distinction *from heaven.* This is the final abode of the blessed; and this high and holy place is much more congenial with their views and feelings than the earth, where they are now left. In the natural creation, things are distinguished and separated according to their qualities; and the Apostle asks, with regard to the church, "What communion hath light with darkness; and what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness, and what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" Order, therefore, seems to require that as soon as men are converted, and bear the image of the heavenly, they should go to their own company; and not remain in "a world lying in wickedness." But were this to be the case, the triumph would be obtained without the fight, and the prize would be reached without running the race: conversion would be always the signal of dissolution; and religion would enter our families like an undertaker, to carry off our connexions to the grave. But there is *a way;* and the *end* of this is peace: there is *a course;* and this is to be *finished* with joy. The Jews imagined they were to possess the land flowing with milk and honey as soon as they were delivered from the house of bondage: but the wilderness was their abode for forty years; and though this condition was far better than the place from whence they came out, it was not to be compared with their destination. "Ye are not yet come unto the rest and the inheritance which the Lord your God giveth you."

They are in the world, in opposition to the requirements of *superstition.* This degrading and perverting system very early prevailed, saying, touch not, taste not, handle not: forbidding also to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and honour the truth; and inducing the votaries, if not always by command, yet by commendation, to resign their secular callings, and recede from society, and live in cells and dens and caves of the earth—which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship and humility and neglecting of the body, not in any honour

to the satisfying of the flesh. But all this was really after the commandments and doctrines of men. Christianity yields it no real countenance. This is not overcoming the world, but refusing the combat. This is not fighting, but fleeing. This is putting the candle under a bushel instead of in a candlestick, where it can give light to all that are in the house. But, says the Saviour, "Let your light so shine *before* men, that they may *see* your good works, and *glorify* your Father who is in heaven."

They are in the world, in qualification of a mistake, to which some Christians even now are prone, and which, though it does not carry them into Popery, *withdraws* them, shall I say, *too much, or rather improperly, from the world.* For here we may err, not only in the article of conformity, but separation; not only in our indulgence, but in our mortification; not only in our love, but in our aversion. If we are the friends of the world, we are the enemies of God; yet we are to honour all men. If we shun the course of this world, we are not to neglect their welfare. While we decline the wicked as companions, we are to attend to them as patients, and endeavour to recover and save and bless them. The ground that at present does not yield us pleasure, must furnish us with employment; that cultivating the barren and the briery soil, under the divine agency, for us—in some few spots at least—the wilderness and the solitary place may be made glad, and the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose. This brings us to the subject of our present meditation—The Christian

In the world.

The theme would fill volumes; and we have only a single lecture for the discussion of it. But let us do what we can. Let us take five views of the subject. Let us consider the Christian in the world, as

In a sphere of Activity.
In a sphere of Observation.
In a sphere of Danger.
In a sphere of Self-Improvement.
In a sphere of Usefulness.

I. In a sphere of Activity.

God obviously intended us for a life of engagement; and

the design is no less conducive to our own advantage individually, than to the welfare of the community in which we live. It is said, that in Turkey the Grand Seignior himself must have been articled to some mechanical trade. Paul had a learned education, yet he was taught the craft of tent-making; and we see of what importance it was to him in a particular emergency. The Jews proverbially said, that he who did not bring up his son to some employment, taught him to be a thief. Bishop Sanderson said, that the two curses of the day in which he lived, were "beggary and shabby gentility." Beggary is too well understood, and too much encouraged; but what his lordship very properly calls shabby gentility, means the pride of family, and the show of finery, and the expensiveness of indulgence, with insufficient means; while all aid derived from any kind of business is declined and contemned. Some, now in easy circumstances, meanly endeavour to conceal the merchandise or trade in which their parents were engaged—though it is pleasing to think the attempt is always vain; as the affectation of these people leads every one to ferret out the secret, and to exclaim, what a pity it is that any should possess property who are ashamed of the honourable way in which it was acquired for them! Of all pride, the most contemptible is that which blushes at trade; especially in a country whose greatness results so much from commerce; and "whose merchants are princes, and whose traffickers are the honourable of the earth." *They* only ought to blush who rise in the morning, not knowing that they have any thing in the world to do, but to eat and drink and trifle and sleep. An angel would pray for annihilation, rather than submit to such disgracefulness for a single day. Activity is the noblest life; it is the life of the soul. It is also the most pleasant, and most healthful. No drudgery equals the wretchedness of ennui. The idle know nothing of *recreation*. Peace and content flee from their feelings. Weakness, and depressed spirits, and trembling nerves, and foolish apprehensions, haunt them: so that these people seem referable to the physician, rather than to the divine.

But the thing has a *moral* bearing, and so comes under the notice of the lecturer. A life of inaction is a disuse of talents, and a perversion of faculties, for which we are responsible. It is the inlet of temptation. Our leisure days are the enemy's busy ones—

"For Satan finds some mischief still,
For idle hands to do."

"Behold, this was the iniquity of Sodom—pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness." When was David overcome? Was it not when, instead of commanding his army in the field, he was indulging himself at noon, upon the house-top? Where grossness of vice is not produced, evils, of a less odious quality, but no less anti-christian, are cherished, especially the indulgence of impertinent curiosity, and whisperings, and backbitings, and slanders—"Withal they learn to be idle, wandering from house to to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also, and busy-bodies, speaking things they ought not." What is the prevention of these vices, and a thousand more? Is the Apostle too severe? "When we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy-bodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread." Thus Adam and Eve were placed in the Garden of Eden—not to live as some of you do; but to dress and to keep it. All through the Old and New Testament you will find that those to whom God appeared, to communicate information, or bestow prerogative, were all engaged, and following their occupations, at the time. If the unemployed think that *He* visits *them*, let them suspect, and inquire whether it be not another being under disguise; for "even Satan also transformeth himself into an angel of light."

Yet it is not sufficient that we are engaged. The Christian must appear in the man of business. He is not only to have a calling, but to "*abide with God* in his calling."—To abide with him by the moderation of his desires and exertions: not entangling himself in the affairs of this life; diligent in business, but not, by multiplication and complexity, injuring the health of his body and the peace of his mind, and compelling himself, if not to omit, to curtail his religious duties; if not to neglect the Sabbath, and the sanctuary, and the closet, yet to render himself unable to attend on the Lord without distraction.—To abide with Him by invariable conscientiousness: doing nothing but what is conformable with truth and rectitude: not content to keep himself within the precincts of legal obligation, but

shunning and detesting in all his dealings, every thing that is mean and overreaching; and exemplifying every thing that is fair and honourable.—To abide with Him by a devout temper and habit; that will remind him of the presence of God and his all-seeing eye; that will keep him from planning or achieving any enterprise without dependance upon Heaven; that will not allow him to say, "To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain; while he knows not what shall be on the morrow;" but induce him to preface every project with the pious acknowledgment, "If the Lord will, we shall live and do this or that;" practically owning the agency of his providence in all the contingencies of his affairs; in every failure and disappointment, submitting to his pleasure; in every favourable turn, in every degree of success, not sacrificing unto his own net, and burning incense unto his own drag, as if by them his pasture was made fat, and his meat plenteous; but ascribing all to the blessing of the Lord that maketh rich, and addeth no sorrow with it.

Thus secular life is christianized, and the bounds of religion enlarged far beyond the district of what we commonly mean by devotion. If the Christian could abide with God only in the express exercises of worship, whether in the closet, the family, or the temple; he could be with him very little. In all situations, the cares of life demand the vaster part of his time and attention: but he may always walk before the Lord in the land of the living: and whether he eats or drinks, or whatever he does, he may do all to the glory of God. Let him, as often as he has opportunity, repair, for impression, refreshment, and aid, to the means of grace, in private and public: but let him also remember, that making the word of God his principle, and the honour of God his aim, he is still serving God, while he is working with his own hands in his secular vocation, and providing things honest in the sight of all men. The spirit of devotion actuates him in the absence of its forms; and this principle, as is reported of the philosopher's stone, turns all it touches into gold. Thus his natural actions become moral; his civil duties become religious; the field or the warehouse is holy ground; and the man of business is "the man of God."

II. In the World he is in a sphere of Observation.

"Ye are the light of the world: a city that is set on an hill cannot be hid." "Ye are manifestly the epistles of Christ, known and read of all men." "We are a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men." It is obvious from hence, that as religious characters, you ought not to be concealed; you will not be concealed; you cannot be concealed. Of this I fear you think too little. Did you sufficiently consider how many eyes are upon you, and the effects that may result from their inspection, you would surely pray, with David, "Teach me thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies:" or, as it is in the margin, "because of them that observe me."

In the church you have observers. The minister who watches for your souls as one that must give an account; the office-bearers; all your fellow-members—all these observe you. But these are good observers, friendly observers: these observe you to consider you, in order to provoke you to love and to good works. But the world furnishes observers of a very different kind, both as to their qualities and their purposes—

—Curious observers. For "you are men wondered at." They think it strange that you run not to the same excess of riot with them. They are amazed at your resigning dissipations, without which they cannot live, and yet profess to be happy; and to see you bear reproach and persecution, and rejoice that you are counted worthy to suffer. They are staggered at your principles; and they are not perfectly satisfied with their own; and so resemble Felix, who wished to hear Paul concerning the faith in Christ; and the Jews, to whom the Apostle appealed when he came to Rome—"And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came showed or spake any harm of thee. But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest; for, as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against."

—Malignant observers. Your temper and conduct and pursuits throw censure upon them; and they hate you because you testify that their deeds are evil. They therefore watch not to commend, but to condemn; not to notice the many good steps you take, but to mark the least halting;

and are delighted when they can detect any thing to degrade you down to their level, any thing to justify their insinuations against you, any thing to make them better pleased with themselves, any thing that may help their faith in the hypocrisy of all religion.

—Unjust observers. It is proper enough for them to compare your conduct with your principles, and your practice with your profession: but they do more than this: For you do not profess to be perfect; yet by nothing less than this rule do they affect to try you. Yea, all irreligious as they are, they exalt themselves into moral censors, and exact more from you than even your religion exacts: for your religion will allow you to be sincere, though you have infirmities; but they will not. Hence they magnify little failings into crimes. Hence they impute the improprieties of a few to the whole body. Hence, instead of judging of your religion by the Scripture, they judge of your religion by you. Hence they even estimate the Leader by his followers, and the Master himself by the disciple.

This is awful; and it shows what incalculable injury we may do when we walk unworthy of the vocation wherewith we are called. For as the poor Indians said of the Spaniards, what a God must he be, who has such hell-hounds for his servants and children: so what must many think of Christ, were they to judge of him by the folly and pride, and avarice and implacability of many who are called by his name?

And what inferences, my fellow-Christians, ought you to draw from hence? It is in vain to fret yourselves, and complain of the injustice of the world. You must regulate yourselves accordingly. Yea, you must turn this vile disposition into a blessing. You must walk in the fear of your God, because of the reproach of the heathen your enemies. You are not of the night nor of darkness; you must therefore walk honestly as in the day. You are on a stage: you must therefore be attentive to your movements. "What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness!" Never be careless of your reputation. Never adopt the maxim of some indiscreet professors—"I care not what the world thinks or says of me"—You ought to care. You ought to value a good name above great riches. You ought to let no accusation attach to you, but in matters pertaining to the law of your God.

III. In the World he is in a sphere of Danger.

Our Lord reminds us of this, when he prays not that we might be taken out of the world, but kept from the evil. Hence we are required to pass the time of our sojourning here in fear. And hence we read, "blessed is the man that feareth always."

We are liable to be drawn sometimes beyond the bounds of permission and duty; and *so* to intermingle with the ungodly as to neglect the command, "Save yourselves from this untoward generation." "Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing." There are companies, and places, and scenes, to which a Christian may be tempted, but in which he must never be found. We have read in Ecclesiastical History of a damsel supposed to be possessed of the devil. The Bishop approached her, and commanded the unclean spirit to come out of her. But he stoutly replied, "I will not:" adding, as the reason of his refusal, "She is my lawful prize. I took her on my own territory. I found her not in the temple, but in the theatre." I have no faith in the fact: but the moral of the fable—(how much of Ecclesiastical History is no better than a fable!)—the moral is good, and useful; and teaches us that we have no warrant to look for divine protection when we are on forbidden ground.

We must needs go out of the world, if we would avoid all intercourse with the ungodly. There is scarcely a day in which we are not brought into such contact with them as duty allows and requires. But is there no caution necessary even then? Is there no danger of infection, when we are among the diseased? Has not a heathen told us, that evil communications corrupt good manners? Need you be informed that even the presence of the wicked may chill your religious fervour; and that their conversation may throw doubts into your minds, and leave stains on the imagination, which cannot be easily removed? How insensibly are we drawn to feel and talk and act like others: especially if there be rank to impress, and talent to fascinate, and friendship to allure, and dependance to excite hope, and favours to attach gratitude!

The danger as to the case before us is, not only from what we meet with in the condition, but from what we bring into it. The world is always the same. Its errors, vices,

examples, endeavours, frowns, smiles, promises, and threatenings, yield incessant and powerful temptations. Yet an angel is not endangered by them: he has not the senses, the passions, the appetites, the corruptions, on which they can operate. But we are not only rational, but animal creatures. We have not only an immaterial spirit, but a material body accessible to every external impression. We are also fallen creatures, and much of the derangement induced by our depravity consists in the ascendancy of the sensual over the intellectual part of our nature.

And if we are sanctified, we are not completely renewed. And owing to the sin that dwelleth in us, we are in danger from our dress, our food, our calling, our connexions. We are in danger not only from sinful, but lawful things. The piece of ground, the yoke of oxen, the married wife—all these are innocent in themselves; yet they may excuse the acceptance of the invitation to the feast, and become the means of perdition. The knowledge we possess may puff us up with vanity. The applause we meet with, may show how drossy we are; as the fining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold, so is a man to his praise. Owing to our susceptibility of shame, and suffering, the fear of man bringeth a snare, and may drive us back or turn us aside from the path of duty. How perilous is it to have not only an active and sleepless enemy without, but a traitor within, to give him every information and advantage. And with regard to the soul, a man's foes are indeed those of his own household. "Then a man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed." How apprehensive and cautious should those be who carry gunpowder, while moving in the neighbourhood of sparks. "Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned?"

Be not therefore high-minded, but fear. Some are indeed obliged by their condition and calling to enter further into the world than others, and so are more exposed; but what we say unto one, we say unto all, watch. "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." Whose attainments are such as to warrant the dismission, or even the relaxation of his vigilance? Whose standing is so secure as to feel it needless any longer to pray, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe?" Are we young? Timothy, with all his faith and godliness, is admonished to flee youthful lusts. Are years beyond the reach of harm? Solomon, after a youth of man-

hood and piety, is drawn aside in his old age. We may fail even in those qualities and graces wherein we most excel Abraham, the father of the faithful, staggered through unbelief, and how did it debase him in Gerar! Moses, more meek than any man on the earth, provoked by the perverseness of the murmurers, "spake unadvisedly with his lips." The disciple who disowned the Saviour, even with oaths and curses, was he who had just said, "though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee;" and who had just drawn his sword, and in the presence of a number of Roman soldiers had cut off the ear of the High Priest's servant. If any imagines that though these admonitions and warnings are needful for others, they are not necessary for *him*, he is the man who far more than every other requires them: for "pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."

It is therefore a great thing, and a thing for which you cannot be too thankful to the God of all grace, if, after so long an exposure in an enemy's land, your hearts have not turned back, neither have your steps declined from his ways. Review the hour when you first gave up your own selves to the Lord and to his people by his will; recal the subsequent vicissitudes of your condition and experience; and exclaim, with wonder and praise,

> "Many years have pass'd since then;
> Many changes I have seen;
> Yet have been upheld till now—
> Who could hold me up but Thou?"

You have had your infirmities; and these ought to humble you. But it is an unspeakable privilege that thus far you have not only been sincere, but without offence, and have not caused the way of truth to be evil spoken of.

"Ah!" say some of you, "such are to be congratulated. Through all the pollutions of a world like this, they have not defiled their garments; and they are ready to walk with their Redeemer in white, for they are worthy. But we are only commencing our religious course. Their warfare may be considered as accomplished: our fight is scarcely begun. The dangers which are behind them, are all before us; and the prospect frequently smites our heart down to the ground." But be not discouraged. Their friend and keeper is with you. He will never leave you nor forsake you. He is able to keep you from falling, and to present

you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. Look to that grace which is sufficient for you; and be concerned to abstain from all appearance of evil. And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly: and I pray God your body, soul, and spirit may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.

IV. In the World he is in a sphere of SELF-IMPROVEMENT.

The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear him. His love to them is infinite. And as he is possessed of unbounded resources to give his friendship effect, it follows that he would not detain them here, unless the condition was compatible with their advantage, and the trials by which they are exercised could be found unto their praise and glory and honour.

When Isaiah would distinguish the guilt of a sinner, he said, "Even in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly"—and nothing can aggravate a man's wickedness more, than to go on still in his transgressions, when every thing in his situation, every thing he hears and sees, excites and encourages him to godliness. By the same principle of reasoning it will appear, that the highest religious excellence is that which is displayed in the land of wickedness; and where evil examples and seductions press on every side. Hence the portrait drawn by the sublimest hand that ever held a pencil.

> ——"Abdiel, faithful found
> Among the faithless, faithful only he;
> Among innumerable false, unmov'd,
> Unshaken, unseduc'd, unterrified,
> His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal;
> Nor number, nor example, with him wrought
> To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind,
> Though single. From amidst them forth he pass'd
> Long way through hostile scorn, which he sustain'd
> Superior, nor of violence fear'd aught."

This gave splendour to the faith of those Christians who were saints even in Cæsar's household. This magnified the sanctity of Daniel, and Moses, and Joseph, who lived in the midst of heathenish, and luxurious, and corrupt courts; and

yet kept themselves pure. This was the honour of Noah that when God had explored the whole world, he said, "Thee *have* I seen righteous before me in this generation."

What is virtue untested? "Blessed is the man that endureth *temptation;* for when he is *tried*, he shall receive the crown of life." It is not by the fireside, or in the circle of his friends, or in the rear of the army with the "stuff," that the hero gathers his laurels; but amidst the confused noise of warriors, and garments rolled in blood. If we were exposed to no frowns and menaces, how could we show the firmness of our religious principles? If we met with no kind of reproach and persecution for the Saviour's sake, how could we evince our belief of his truth and our love to his cause? Were we urged to follow no will but his, how could we obey God rather than man?

Am I offended? What an opportunity have I to prove that I can forgive my brother his trespasses! Am I opposed and injured? Here my patience and meekness are called forth. Here I am in the noblest field of action. I am more than a conqueror. I am not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

Can I pass a day or an hour, and not perceive the goodness and forbearance of that God, who though still insulted by the world which he has made, yet spares it, and is never weary in filling it with plenteousness?—Is my soul vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked; and do I not wonder at the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who came into such a world, and resided here for three and thirty years, bearing the contradiction of sinners against himself?—Can I view the depravity of others, and know that I am a partaker of the very same nature, and not feel abased, and ashamed, like the martyr, who whenever he saw a sinner in his sins, said, "There goes Bradford, but for the grace of God."—How can we view the vassalage of the ungodly under the tyranny of their passions, and led captive by the devil at his will, and not remember that we ourselves also were sometimes foolish and disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures; and not ask who made us to differ from others; and what have we that we have not received?—How can we see the vileness of sin in its ugly tempers and detestable practices, and not be excited to abhor that which is evil, and cleave to that which is good?—How can we contemplate the miseries of the sinner, and not have our faith confirmed in the testimony of the Scripture

that assures us the end of these things is death; the way of transgressors is hard; there is no peace to the wicked?—And when we behold them blind and deaf, and madly rushing on to destruction, will not all the compassion of our souls be moved, will not all our zeal be inflamed, to endeavour to save them?

V. In the World he is in a sphere of USEFULNESS.

We principally mean religious usefulness. We would not indeed limit your exertions. Do all the good that is in your power. Feed the hungry, clothe the naked, administer to the sick, visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction—But forget not, that charity to the soul is the soul of charity. There is no evil from which you can deliver a fellow-creature to be compared with sin; and there is no good you can obtain for him like that grace whose fruit is holiness, and whose end is everlasting life.

And fix in your minds, my Christian friends, not only the importance of the object, but the possibility of accomplishing it. David did not despair of success when he said, "Then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee." And what says the Apostle James? "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." God works by means; and it is by his people that he principally carries on his cause in the world. They are his witnesses. They are his servants. He first makes them the subjects of his grace, and then the mediums. He first turns them from rebels into friends, and then employs them to go and beseech others to be reconciled unto God. For they know the wretchedness of a state of alienation from him. They know the blessedness of a return. They have "tasted that the Lord is gracious." Their own experience gives them earnestness and confidence in saying to those around them, "O taste, and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him."

Let us enter more fully into this most essential part of our subject.

The persons for whom you are to be concerned are represented as *without;* and your object is to bring them in. They are ignorant, and you must inform them. They are prejudiced, and you must remove their objections. They

are full of aversion, and you must subdue this dislike. The Scripture calls this "gaining" them; "winning" them. In order to this, address is necessary, as well as zeal: "He that winneth souls is wise." Hence the Apostle requires you to "walk in wisdom towards them that are without." The question is, what this wisdom includes. Here I wish I had more time to enlarge and particularize. I know nothing concerning which the conduct of many religious people needs more correction. I will therefore venture to exceed a little the limits allotted to this exercise; though, after all, we can only throw out a few hints for your observance.

If then you would bring in those that are without, show nothing like a contemptuous superiority or distance. Avoid every air of the Pharisee, who says, "Stand by thyself; come not near me; I am holier than thou." Convince them that you love them, and have no object in view but their own welfare. And therefore be kind, and tender, and ready to serve them. Especially be attentive to them in trouble; for nothing affects persons more deeply, than the notice you take of them in distress. It will look disinterested; and will not fail to form in their minds a striking contrast between you and the people of the world, and lead them to say, "How these people differ from others! Other friends drop us in adversity; but then these take us up. They are not meanly governed by advantage, but love their neighbours as themselves."

—Learn to distinguish things that differ. What fisherman would employ the same bait for every kind of fish, and at every season of the year? Who, wishing to convince, would seize the moment of passion and irritation; and not wait the return of calmness and reason? Who, having to reprove, would not administer the rebuke privately, rather than mortify and exasperate by public exposure? "Tell him his fault between him and thee alone: if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother." How different are the conditions, the habits, the principles, the tempers of men! And who was it that said, "Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification?" And did not his own example enforce his advice? "Though I be free from all men, yet have made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more." "And this I do for the Gospel's sake." "Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved."

—Never begin in a way of attack. This puts you into the posture of an enemy, and provokes a feeling of defence and resistance. Recommend what is right, rather than oppose what is wrong; and let *them*, by the perception of the one, discover and condemn the other. The best way of effecting the expulsion of evil, is by the introduction of good. What is it to tear people away from their amusements, before any superior source of pleasure be opened to their minds? Their hearts are still after their idols. They only act the hypocrite in their abstinence; and hate the religion that forbids their happiness. Let something better be substituted; and the soul is even as a weaned child.

—And do not attempt every thing at once. "There is," says Henry, "not only an underdoing, but an overdoing; and such an overdoing, as sometimes proves an undoing." When the disciples of John asked our Saviour, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?"—he said unto them, "Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast. No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment; for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles; else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish; but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved." Now what you have here to consider, is, not so much the imagery of the comparisons, as the principle. His meaning is, that some things, proper in themselves, are yet not seasonable; and that we may do hurt rather than good, by endeavouring to effect too much. Look to his life for an illustration of his doctrine. Did he despise the day of small things? Did he break the bruised reed, or quench the smoking flax? Did not he say to his disciples, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now?" How unlike him are they who force upon the mind every difficult sentiment, regardless of any preparation made by experience for the reception of it. "How unwise," as an old writer has it, "is the conduct of those who send their pupils to the university of predestination, before they have entered the grammar-school of repentance." How injurious is it, when the tenderness of age requires only milk, to feed babes with strong

meat,—yea and even to furnish them with the bones of controversy.

—Do not attach great importance to little things. This is the way to make people think that your religion consists of whims or trifles; and that your integrity and firmness are but squeamishness and obstinacy. Show that though you have a tender conscience, you have not a weak one. Show that your convictions are not opinions, but principles. Show that your object is not to make proselytes to your party, but converts to the cause of real Christianity.

—Beware of every thing in your conduct that would prove a scandal. They who see, can get over stumbling-blocks; but who would throw them in the way of the blind? "Make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed." Administer no cause of censure but what your religion itself supplies. You are not answerable for the offence of the cross. But there are many other offences—and wo to the world because of them! The falls of professors are judgments on the neighbourhood in which they live. What a noble spirit dictated the resolution, "Wherefore if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." And how far did Ezra carry the delicacy of his religious zeal! There was no real inconsistency between dependence upon God, and the use of means: but he had to deal with a poor ignorant heathen, who might easily misapprehend and pervert the language of his confidence; and therefore, says he, "I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way, because we had spoken unto the king, saying, the hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him. So we fasted, and besought our God for this; and he was entreated of us."

—While your religion is impressive by its consistency, let it be attractive by its amiableness. Therefore, think upon and pursue whatsoever things are lovely, and of good report. In excuse for the disagreeable tempers and the repulsive manners of some Christians, it is said, that grace may be grafted on a crab-stock. Be it so. But instead of excusing the improprieties, the metaphor condemns. When a tree *is* grafted, it is always expected to bear fruit according to the scion, and not according to the stock: and "the

fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."

—Nothing recommends godliness more than cheerfulness. All men desire happiness; and if while every other candidate for the prize fails, you succeed, your success may determine others to follow your envied course. Hence it is not very desirable that religion should be so often expressed by the word seriousness. Among many people, as soon as ever a man is becoming religious, it is said he is becoming "serious." But does not religion also make him humble, and benevolent, and hopeful, and blessed? Why then should we select so exclusively for the designation of its influence, an attribute or an effect which is common with many others, but yet the least inviting, and most liable to an injurious construction? I never use it—and if I were obliged to use any other term than *religious* itself, I would rather say the man was *becoming happy*.

It will be allowed that many of these advices are of a negative kind. But there are many ways in which you may positively exert yourselves. Such as—By conversation. By epistolary correspondence. By recommending good books. By bringing persons under the preaching of the word; for "faith cometh by hearing." As soon as Andrew knew the Lord, "he findeth his own *brother* Simon, and saith to him, we have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ; and he brought him to Jesus." As soon as Philip knew him, he findeth his *friend* Nathanael, and saith unto him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write." As soon as the woman of Samaria knew him, "she left her water-pot, and went into the city, and saith to her *neighbours*, Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did." And how many was she the instrument of inducing to believe on the Saviour of the world!

The opportunities and influences of individuals will be very unequal; but all should seek to obtain the commendation conferred on Mary in the Gospel, "She hath done what she could."

Yet it is not always by direct effort, that you will best succeed. A word fitly spoken is valuable; but, in general, it is better for persons to *see* your religion than to *hear* it: it is better to hold forth the word of truth in your lives, rather than in your language; and by your tempers, rather

than by your tongues. The relations in which some pious characters are found peculiarly require the observance of this distinction. Such, for instance, are professing servants. *Their* province of usefulness is not by teaching and exhorting and reproving. One of these was recently speaking to the preacher, of her master and mistress, and complained, "Nothing I say to them seems to do them any good." To whom—knowing the *class* of the individual, he replied, "What you *say* to them! But this is not the way in which *you* are to expect to do them good—but by early rising; by neatness, and order, and diligence; by 'not answering again; by not purloining, but showing all good fidelity:' it is thus that you are to 'adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things.'" I am far from ranking wives with servants and dependants. My female hearers, you will bear me witness that I never plead for the degradation of your sex; and I am sure you will not count me your enemy because I tell you the truth. We need not remind you of the language of the Apostle: "I suffer not a woman to teach, nor usurp an authority over the man; but to be in silence." He can only speak comparatively. We know you are well endued with speech; and we delight to hear your readiness and skill. But we yet question whether any talent, even of this kind, be your most advantageous and successful instrument. The love of home; the concern to please; the silent tear; the graceful sacrifice; the willing concession; the placid temper—these upon men—and we presume you would not have married brutes—these upon ingenuous and attached husbands, will seldom fail of producing their effect, really, if not instantly. "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives, while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." There is no eloquence so powerful as the address of a holy and consistent life. It shames the accusers. It puts to silence the ignorance of foolish men. It constrains them by the good works which they behold, to glorify God in the day of visitation.

—We hope there is no Cain here this morning, who in answer to all this is ready to say, "Am I my brother's keeper?" From this obligation to seek the salvation of others, *none* are exempted. But if some are more peculiarly bound than others, they are those who have been saved from a long and awful course of vice themselves. *You* ought to feel, above others, a claim of gratitude, and of justice. You have had much forgiven, and you should love much. You have been a curse to many; you ought now to be a blessing. Oh! it seems enough to make you shed tears of blood to think that there are some now in hell who ascribe their destruction to you: while others are walking the downward road, urged on and encouraged by your former errors and crimes and influence. Some of these are placed beyond your reach. Others are yet accessible. O! repair to them immediately. They know your former condition; describe to them your present; and acquaint them with the peace and pleasure which have resulted from your conversion. Who can tell what an affectionate and earnest testimony, derived from experience, and accompanied with a change too obvious to be denied, may accomplish?

—But "them that honour me," says God, "I will honour." Let all your attempts therefore be preceded and attended and followed by prayer. This will prepare you for your work; this will encourage you in it. This will preserve you from growing weary in well-doing. This will teach you not to consider any of your fellow-creatures as abandoned; and keep you from giving over the use of means to reclaim them. Nothing is too hard for the Lord; and prayer brings *him* into the scene: we are workers together with God—"Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord."

—And need I say, "Whatsoever your hand findeth to do, do it with your might;" do it immediately. While you delay, *they* may be gone, and their condition determined for ever. While you linger, *you* may be gone, and every possibility of usefulness be shut out. "For what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." Yet all your opportunities of doing good are limited to this short and equally uncertain duration. In consequence of this, what an inestimable value attaches to the present hour. Awake, my fellow-Christians, and redeem the time. Remember, earth has one privilege above heaven. It is the privilege of Beneficence. The

privilege of passing by a transgression, of relieving the distressed, of spreading the Scriptures, of evangelizing the heathens, of instructing the ignorant, of reclaiming the vicious, of seeking and saving them that are lost. They who are now in joy and felicity, would be ready, were it the will of God, to descend from their glory, and re-enter the body, and traverse the vale of tears again, to be able to do, for a number of years, what at present lies within the reach of every one of you.—Is this incredible? Why they are now perfect in knowledge; and see that "it is not the will of our Father who is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish." Why their benevolence is now perfect; they dwell in love, and God dwelleth in them. They are filled with the Spirit of Him who "though he was rich, yet for your sakes became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."

Christians! we have thus spoken of your being in the world. Let me now speak of your leaving it. After David had served his generation by the will of God, he fell on sleep, and was gathered to his fathers. Jesus went about doing good; but at last he said, "I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." "And now I am no more in the world. Holy Father, I come to thee." Such is the removal that awaits you all. You will soon be no more in this world—how soon, it is impossible to determine. But as to some of you, from the infirmities of nature and the course of years, the event cannot be very remote, and you need not—you do not deplore it. "Your salvation is now nearer than when you believed." "The night is far spent. The day is at hand."

You are not required to be indifferent to what is passing around you, or insensible to the events that befall yourselves; but you are to feel as Christians, and you are to declare plainly you seek a country. You are not to undervalue a state in which you enjoy many comforts, and are favoured with the means of grace, and are blessed and dignified with opportunities of usefulness; but considered as your portion, and your dwelling-place, the voice cries, and you ought to hear it, "Arise, and depart hence, for this is not your rest, because it is polluted." You are not to be in haste to leave it, while God has any thing for you to do, or to suffer: but while bearing the burden and heat of the day, you may resemble the man in harvest: he does

not throw down his implements and run out of the field before the time; but he occasionally erects himself and looks westward, to see when the descending sun will furnish him with an honourable discharge.

"Jesus," the Evangelist tells us, "knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father." There was something peculiar here. He *knew* the time of his departure, and had his eye upon it, and regulated his measures by it from the beginning—But you must say with Isaac, "I know not the day of my death." Yet you also have *your hour* appointed for this purpose; and appointed by Infinite Wisdom and Goodness. And till it arrives, you are immortal; and friends cannot retard, and enemies cannot accelerate its approach.

—And what will it then be but a departure *out of this world?* This vain world—this vexing world—this defiling world—this tempting world—this world which crucified the Lord of Glory—this world in which you walk by faith, and not by sight; and in which you so often exclaim, "Wo is me, that I dwell in Mesech, and make my tents in Kedar."

—What will it be but a departure out of this world, *to the Father?* to *his* world? To *his* abode?—and to *yours* also? For since you are the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty, your going to the Father, is going home. The poet represents the traveller returning at eve, buried in the drifted snow, as "stung with the thoughts of home;" a home he was not permitted to see. But, Christian, no disaster shall hinder your arriving at your Father's house in peace. And as your home is sure, so it is replenished with every attraction that can draw you forward. When the venerable Mede, whose grey hairs were a crown of glory, being found in the way of righteousness, was asked how he was? resting upon his staff, he cheerfully answered, "Why, going home as fast as I can; as every honest man ought to do when his day's work is done: and I bless God, I have a good home to go to." God forbid, Christians, that you should be all your lifetime subject to bondage through fear of an event that has so much to render it not only harmless, but desirable. Does the Lord Jesus stand in no relation to you? Is not he your ransom and your advocate? Is not he your righteousness and strength? Has not he abolished death, and brought life and immortality

to light through the gospel? Has not he opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers? Has not he said, "If a man keep my sayings, he shall never see death?" What is dying now, but your hour to depart out of this world unto the Father?—

"*There* is my house and portion fair;
My treasure and my heart is there,
And my abiding home:
For me my elder brethren stay,
And angels beckon me away,
And Jesus bids me come."

LECTURE VI.

THE CHRISTIAN, IN PROSPERITY.

"I spake unto thee in thy Prosperity; but thou saidst, I will not hear."—Jer. xxii. 21.

The providence of God was presented in vision to Ezekiel, under the image of a vast wheel. The design was to show, that its dispensations were constantly changing. For as in the motion of a wheel, one spoke is always ascending, and another is descending; and one part of the ring is grating on the ground, and another is aloft in the air; so it is with the affairs of empires, families, and individuals—they never continue in one stay. And not only is there a diversity in human conditions, so that while some are rich, others are poor; and while some are in honour, others are in obscurity and disgrace; but frequently the same person is destined successively to exemplify, in his own experience, the opposite estates of prosperity and adversity. Such characters strike us in the Scripture; they abound in history; they are to be met with in our daily walk; they are to be addressed in every congregation.

But these vicissitudes are great trials of religious principle; and happy is he who can press forward undismayed by the rough, and unseduced by the pleasant he meets with, in his course; who can preserve the balance of the mind in all the unequal pressures of human life; and who, prepared for each variety of circumstances in which he can be placed, is authorized to say, "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; every where, and in all things, I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Such is the Christian—or must I say, such he ought to be! This exercise brings him before us in the possession of

Prosperity.

I need not detain you in specifying the ingredients of this envied state.—It must include health. This is the salt that seasons, and the honey that sweetens every temporal comfort. Yet how little of it do some enjoy. How affecting is the complaint they are constrained to utter—"I am made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed unto me: when I lie down, I say, When shall I arise, and the night be gone; I am full of tossings to and fro, until the dawning of the day."—"He is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain, so that his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat." While others scarcely know from their own feelings what disease, or indisposition, or infirmity, means.

—It must take in agreeable relations. What are the caresses of the world, if a man be chilled with neglect or repulsed with frowns at home? What are the productions of the field and the garden, if, as the Prophet says, "thorns are in our tabernacle?" "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith." What a difference is there, between a "brawling woman in a wide house," and "a wife that is as a loving hind and a pleasant roe!" Job, looking, back to the days of his prosperity, says, "when my children were about me." They were united and affectionate and dutiful. What must be the wretchedness of a parent whose offspring are the reverse of all this!—Friendship must not be absent. Who can dispense with this balm of life? Who does not feel his need of another's bosom, if not of another's hand? What is general and indiscriminate society! I must have one whose sympathies lead him to rejoice when I rejoice, and to weep when I weep: or my grief is too heavy for me to bear; or my pleasure loses half its relish. "Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart; so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel."—Who can be so low and grovelling as to have no regard for the opinion and approbation of his fellow-creatures? "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches; and loving favour rather than silver and gold." "The light of the eyes rejoiceth the heart: and a good report maketh the bones fat."—But the use of the term more directly reminds us of the fruit of our wishes, and the success of our en-

deavours, in our calling or profession; and the securing and commanding a degree of wealth above competency. For "money is a defence," and screens us from the evils of dependance and embarrassment. "Money answereth all things:" it procures a thousand advantages; and affords not only the necessaries, but the conveniences, and indulgences, and embellishments of life.

Now the portion only of a very few favoured individuals includes all these ingredients; but the greater the confluence of them in number and degree, the better we consider the cup of prosperity replenished.

But can such a cup be seen in the hand of a Christian? Why not? In general, indeed, the language of the Scripture befriends the needy and distressed; and what generous mind does not rejoice in this aspect of benevolent preference? Who does not read with pleasure, "I will leave in the midst of thee a poor and an afflicted people, and they shall trust in the Lord their God." "The poor have the Gospel preached unto them." "God hath chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him." But this is not true of them, *universally* and *exclusively*. We are told that not *many* of the higher ranks in life are called: but the very assertion implies that there are *some*. Our Saviour said to his followers, "If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily." "In the world ye shall have tribulation." Yet he also said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." The Apostle who taught, that "through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom," made no scruple to say, "Godliness has the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come." Peter, also, who charged Christians not to think it strange "concerning the fiery trial as if some strange thing had happened unto them," confidently asserts, "He that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" And religion, by its natural influence as well as by the blessing

of an overruling Providence, tends in various ways to advance the temporal welfare of men.

We have not time to exemplify these remarks, but we mention them the more readily, because some Pietists seem to look upon all the distinctions and endowments of life, as *nearly* sealing their owners unto the day of perdition; and to conclude that their good things here are only pledges of their evil ones hereafter. It is true, this was the result, in the case of the rich man in the parable. But it was not so with Abraham, mentioned in the same story—yet Abraham had been very wealthy. We allow that there is enough to alarm the prosperous; but they have no ground for despair. The proprietors of no condition here, are under any sentence of reprobation. They that have riches shall hardly enter into the kingdom of God; but with God all things are possible. There is a way to heaven from all the diversities of human life; and there is a passage from the mansion as well as from the cottage, though it is more narrow and perplexing and difficult. In a word: a Christian is never to be known *by* his condition; but he must be always known *in* it; for he belongs to a "peculiar people zealous of good works."

In confirmation of which, let us proceed to hear what God the Lord has to say concerning us in the estate we are now surveying—I *spake unto thee in thy prosperity*—He is always alive to our welfare, and of this he never leaves himself without witness: and if ever we err in conduct, or fail in character, it is owing to our disbelief of his word, or inattention to it. For the Scripture is not only able to make us wise unto salvation; but "is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Now in your prosperity he requires of you three things:

I. That you should be AWARE OF ITS PERILS.
II. That you should EMPLOY ITS SAFEGUARDS.
III. That you should IMPROVE ITS ADVANTAGES.

O let Him not complain—*But thou saidst, I will not hear.*

I. You are required to be AWARE OF THE PERILS OF PROSPERITY.

Here it must be acknowledged we are furnished with a very mortifying view of human nature. The produce of creation, and the bounties of Providence are good in themselves; and they are the gifts of God; and they ought to induce us to love and serve the Giver. And they would have this effect, were we not in a state of moral perversion and depravity. The goodness of God leadeth to repentance—this is the design of it; this is the tendency of it. But what is the effect? Answer this, ye who suppose that man is so innocent, so amiable, so dignified a creature! You deny that the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. You deny that man as he now comes into the world is otherwise than he was originally created.—But can you deny that we are evil, *because* God is good? That we are unable to bear gratification uninjured? That what should draw us to God, with the cords of a man and the bands of love, leads us away from him? That the very blessings we receive from him we convert into weapons of rebellion against our Benefactor? Or will you affirm that we *thus* came from our Maker's hand? "Lo! this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions."

There is one case in which prosperity is peculiarly perilous—when it is not hereditary, but acquired; and when it is acquired, not by degrees, but suddenly. He is most likely to be giddy, who has not been accustomed to elevation. He is most likely to have his health injured who passes all at once from one climate to another; while, by use, nature may be attempered to almost any extremity. But though prosperity is peculiarly dangerous when it is neither natural nor gradual, it will be easy to prove that it is *never* free from numberless moral hazards.

Let us turn first to the faithful word. What says David? "Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God." What says Job? "Their seed is established in their sight with them, and their offspring before their eyes. Their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them. Their bull gendereth, and faileth not; their cow calveth, and casteth not her calf. They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance. They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ. They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave. Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.

What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?" What is Jeremiah's report concerning Moab? "Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity; therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed." But surely it was otherwise with the Jews? Hear Moses: "He made him to ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock; butter of kine, and milk of sheep, and fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the fat of kidneys of wheat; and thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape. But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness: then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation." Hear Hosea: "According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me." Are we better than they? Let us appeal to reason, to observation, to experience. How many duties are there which prosperity tends to discourage and hinder. How many evils are there which its influence upon depraved beings is adapted to cherish and increase. What are these? Let us particularize a few of them—for their name is Legion.

—Such is *Unmindfulness of God.* Hence the caution of Moses, "When thou shalt have eaten and art full, then beware lest thou forget the Lord that brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage." Hence the prayer of Agar, "Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord?" The disciples suffered the Saviour to sleep while the vessel was sailing smoothly: but when the wind and the waves threatened, they went to him, saying, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" It is in affliction we seek him early. It is then we think of his moral agency; and fear that he is come to call our sins to remembrance. It is then we feel our dependance upon him—Then other helpers fail: then we have no substitutes; then we have no diversion—We can dispense with him no longer—we are forced upon him. "Who is the Lord, that *I* should obey his voice?" said Pharaoh, in all the affluence of his greatness. "Entreat the Lord for me," was the sup-

pliant language of the same haughty monarch, brought down by the judgments of heaven.

—Such is *Pride.* David remarks this. "Pride compasseth them like a chain." Nebuchadnezzar is an example of it. The king spake and said, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?"

> "Pigmies are pigmies still, though perch'd on Alps:
> And pyramids are pyramids in vales."

Yet men estimate their height, not by their figure, but by their elevation. A man is as distinguishable from his circumstances as a steed is from his caparisons; and as the latter would be judged of by his stature, and strength, and gracefulness, and speed, so the former should be valued only by his personal and intrinsic worth. But to make ourselves to be something when we are nothing, we compose ourselves, so to speak, of every thing outward and adventitious; we add horses, and lands, and equipage, and offices, and titles, and attendants; and thus enlarged and magnified, we think ourselves Anakims, while others are but grasshoppers in our sight. Wealth can even give wisdom. It enlarges the understanding of the possessor. It qualifies him to speak and decide; so that his drivellings which were despised before, become oracular. For the world is as blameable as the fool himself. The one no more readily receives, than the other pays this vile homage. The image of gold is sure of worshippers, if it be only a golden calf.

—Such is *Self-delusion.* The prosperous seldom hear the truth. They are never reproved. Their failings are often admired. Their faults are even turned into virtues, and imitated by their dependants. All join to flatter and delude them. Yea, God himself is accessory to their flattery and delusion—not by his design, but by their misconstructions of his conduct. For they are induced to think that they are his favourites, because he not only spares, but indulges them; and conclude that he will not treat them worse in another world than he has done in this.

—Such is *Unwillingness to bear the Cross.* Why did the young man in the gospel go away sorrowful? "He was very rich." He had much that was amiable, and much that was promising. He engaged our Saviour's affections; and wished to follow him: but he had too much to leave behind.

Why did not the Pharisees, who believed on him, confess him? "They feared lest they should have been put out of the synagogue, for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." Eusebius, in speaking of the persecution under Decius, observes, that most of those who apostatised were not from among the poor, but the rich. They who are softened by care, and rendered delicate by indulgence, are little prepared for a rough campaign, and cannot be expected to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

—Such is *Earthly-mindedness.* Who are so likely to mind earthly things as those who abound with them? Who has so many ties to life? No condition indeed, here, will bear any comparison with the futute state of the blessed: yet, according to our present views and feelings, the mansion and the pleasant scenery around, have more power to attract and detain than the desolateness of the poor-house. How little have some to resign! How much have they to urge their departure! How often does the heart's bitterness lead them to sigh, "I loathe it, I would not live alway"—"O! that I had wings like a dove, for then would I flee away and be at rest; I would haste me from the stormy wind and tempest." What uneasiness have others to excite them! How much have they to give up! How deep-rooted are they; and what force is necessary to loosen them from their position! "Ah!" said Johnson to Garrick, as he was walking over his bowers—"these are the things that make us unwilling to die."

—Such is *Worldly Conformity.* They are not the poor, but the rich, who have intercourse with the world. These are they who are tempted to recommend themselves to their friendship; to emulate their pretensions; to adopt their maxims, and manners, and *hours.*

—We may also mention *Self-indulgence.* We are far from pleading for monkish austerities and abstemiousness. Yet a Christian is to deny himself. Yet temperance is a part of godliness. Yet we are forbidden to provide for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof. But who is most likely to be profuse in dress and in furniture? Whose table is likely to become a snare? Who is in danger of feasting himself without fear? Whose precious mornings are most likely to be wasted in bed?

—To this we may add *Unfeelingness.* He is most likely to be kind to a stranger who knows the heart of a stranger,

having been a stranger in a strange land. Who ever thinks of the gay and the dissipated in the hour of trouble? What interest will he feel in my grief who never wept himself? The tenderest and the most active sympathy flows from experience. What does a king know of the miseries of his subjects? He never looked into their hovel; never tasted their bitter bread. They whose condition or office exempts them from the common vexations and distresses of life, are always the most insensible to the duties and calls of compassion. Only a priest or a Levite *could* have passed by on the other side; and left the poor wounded bleeding traveller to his fate.

After all, we have only presented a few specimens of the dangers of prosperity. But surely they are enough to keep you from looking with grudging and uneasiness on the condition of those that abound in the world. Surely they are enough to induce you, instead of envying those that rise, to pity them and pray for them; for they are set in slippery places.

Surely we have said enough to excite those who are denied prosperity to be resigned and satisfied. Ah! ye who have had your purposes broken off, even the thoughts of your hearts: ye who have wished to build your nests on high, and say to your soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry: ye to whom, after all your importunings of his Providence, God has said, "Let it suffice; say no more to me of that matter"—Ah! who can tell what you have escaped? Who can tell what you might have been? You might, as Solomon has it, have been talking with your feet, and have swaggered by your neighbours. You might have answered roughly. You might have pleased a tyrant's heart, in making yourselves feared. You might have acted a Diotrephes in the parish or the church. You might have heard with indifference every tale of wo. You might have abandoned the worship of God in your families, and have lost your attachment to his Sabbaths and his house. You might have made your passage your portion; and instead of arising and departing hence, have felt yourselves at home in the body; and, "careful about many things," have overlooked that "good part" which now you have happily chosen, and which shall not be taken away from you.

Let all abandon their eager desires after the world; and if they must increase, be concerned to increase with all

the increase of God. "Seekest thou great things to thyself? seek them not." "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." "For they that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." The Apostle, in this passage, seems to refer to two classes of persons. First, to those who perish in their worldly things, making shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. These he compares to men at sea who founder, and are seen no more—they are drowned in destruction and perdition. Secondly, to those who are not destroyed but injured. These he compares to travellers, who seeing, as they are going along, some inviting fruit a little out of their road, step aside to gather: but as it is surrounded with thorns and briers, they wound themselves in the attempt. These *err* from the faith, and *pierce* themselves through with *many sorrows*.

For while the prosperity of fools destroys them, the prosperity of wise men may harm them.—Saul was lost by his advancement; but David himself was injured: and hence we read of his "first ways." The hero, the conqueror, the king, never equalled the shepherd of Bethlehem.

Upon this principle, if you had to choose, you should not, you would not choose a state so frequently destructive; so commonly hurtful. You would not conclude that you were better than others, and that you should be safe where your brethren have so generally failed. If you did, *you* would be *sure* to yield; for "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."

But the choice is not left to yourselves. The Lord chooses your inheritance for you: and in his pleasure you must acquiesce. Only be sensible of the perils of the condition.

II. You are required to employ its SAFEGUARDS.

And *first*, if you would escape the evils of Prosperity, consider much your *Responsibility*. Never imagine that the things you possess are your own, and that you are at liberty to do what you please with them. They are all in

the nature of a trust. You are not the proprietors, but the stewards. When you receive them, a voice cries, "Occupy till I come:" and then the same voice will say, "Give account of thy stewardship, for thou shalt be no longer steward." Keep your minds alive to the certainty of this account; the extent of this account; the strictness of this account; the nearness of this account—"Behold, the Judge standeth before the door." "Let your moderation be known unto all men: the Lord is at hand."

Secondly, Reflect on the *brevity of your Possessions.* There is a day coming when the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the earth, and all the works that are therein, shall be burned up. And then, "to whom will ye flee for help, and where will you leave your glory?"—But this prospect seems very far off; and the distance prevents impression.—Is death then far off? You have only a life-interest in your estate. And "what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." Then you must part with all for ever. "For we brought nothing with us into the world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out."—But how frequently is the continuance of your possessions and enjoyments much shorter than life itself! "Wilt thou," therefore, says Solomon, "set thy heart on that which is not? For riches make to themselves wings and fly away." "Brethren," says the Apostle, "the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none, and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not."

Thirdly, Study *the vanity of your Acquisitions.* How little can they contribute to the reality of your happiness! Look at those in the circle of your acquaintance. Do you know any of them, I will not say that have improved in religion, but that have increased in comfort? As to yourselves; have your contentment, and peace, and pleasure, risen with your circumstances in the world? Some years ago, a merchant, who had retired with affluence, said, I now keep eight servants, but I am not half so happy as when I kept one. A clothier, also, who had risen to wealth, was heard to say, as he was walking up and down in his room, devoured with *ennui* and depressed spirits, O! for the comfort I knew when I was working at the loom. And when the preacher ventured to ask these gentlemen what pre-

vented their going back, and going down, to the comfort and happiness of their former condition, they shook the head —This is one of the evils of the state. People rise eagerly, and go on groaning; but the pride of life does not allow of their descending and re-entering the privacy they envy. Can riches profit in the day of wrath? Can any abundance relieve the anguish of a wounded spirit? What a source of perplexity and anxiety is a prosperous estate! "In the midst of his sufficiency he shall be in straits." What an attraction is it of ill-will! What an excitement to envy and slander! The success of a rival; the superior display of a neighbour: yea, even the disregard of an individual seemingly incapable of annoying us—even *his* neglect may spoil the relish of a courtier's bliss, the favourite of the owner of a hundred and twenty-seven provinces. "When he came home he sent and called for his friends, and Zeresh his wife. And Haman told them of the glory of his riches and the multitude of his children, and all the things wherein the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the princes and servants of the king. Haman said, moreover, Yea, Esther the queen did let no man come in with the king unto the banquet that she had prepared, but myself; and to-morrow am I invited unto her also with the king. Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate."

People often wonder at *your* uneasiness; but the heart knoweth his own bitterness. *You* feel some worm at the root withering the gourd that overshadows you. Perhaps some personal or relative trial preys upon the peace of your mind. Perhaps the dear companion who once walked with you along your flowery path is removed far from you; and disinclined to retrace the spots once endeared by social converse, you watch and are alone, as a sparrow upon the house-top. Perhaps, when you sit down at table, David's seat is empty—and tears are your meat day and night. Perhaps the heir, who was to perpetuate your name and inherit your property, now occupies a tomb on which you have inscribed, "And Thou destroyest the hope of man." Perhaps an infirmity is entailed upon you for life. Perhaps some disease is gradually undermining your frame. Perhaps your senses are declining; and desire fails: and the days are come wherein you have no pleasure. "Then I looked on all the work that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was

vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun."

Fourthly, Think *how little worldly prosperity has distinguished many of the excellent of the earth.* When you are tempted to glory in wealth, remember what a multitude there is in poor life who would make you shrink into nothing, if you were morally compared with them: and what is gold to godliness? What superior grace, and wisdom, and usefulness dignified numbers of those servants of the Most High God and benefactors of men, who passed their days in a state of dependance, or ended them in a prison! Read the history, examine the lives of those preachers and writers whose immortal works praise them in all the churches. Take Luther, that great Reformer, who has levied a tax of admiration and gratitude on every age. He has this passage in his last will and testament—"O Lord God, I thank thee that thou hast been pleased to make me a poor and indigent man upon earth. I have neither house, nor land, nor money to leave behind me. Thou hast given me a wife and children, whom I now restore to thee. Lord, nourish, teach, and preserve them as thou hast me." The Apostles could say, "Even unto this present hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffetted, and have no certain dwelling-place." And the Lord of Glory, the image of the invisible God, had not where to lay his head—And *yet* we think wealth the standard of excellence.

—Again. *Daily realize the assurances of Revelation.* "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." The influence of a greater good will abolish the impression of a less. The man who walks by sight, is sure to be conquered: the things which are seen are temporal, and he sees no other; these therefore strike and please and engross him. But the man who walks by faith, sees things invisible to the eye of sense; and these are eternal: and they are infinite. What is the honour that cometh from man, compared with the smiles of God? What is a handful of shining dust compared with "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory?" Can the stars be seen, in the shining of the sun? What saved Moses in circumstances far more perilous than those of his birth? "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." What led Abraham to "sojourn," even "in the

land of promise, as in a strange land, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise?" Faith. "For he looked for a city which had foundations, whose builder and maker is God—These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things, declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned: but now they desire a better country, that is an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city."

Finally. Forget not *the Admonition of the Saviour:* "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." And what he has joined together let no man put asunder. In vain I invoke God, if I am careless; and expose myself needlessly in dangerous places and company; and leave without a sentinel, my senses, and appetites, and passions; and keep not my heart with all diligence; and use not all the means of preservation which are placed within my reach—prayer without watching, is hypocrisy. And watching without prayer, is presumption. Our strength is in God alone. He will make us know this, not only by the testimony of his word, but by our experience. And we need not be afraid of the growing conviction. When we are weak, then are we strong. For He to whom a sense of our weakness will urge us to repair, is able to keep us from falling. Whatever be our inability and danger, if he holds us up, we shall be safe. Let not those be discouraged who seek his help. The very exercise of prayer tends to secure you. But you have more to rely upon than the moral influence of the duty. If there be any meaning in the Scriptures, God hears prayer; he grants our petitions; he strengthens us with might by his Spirit in the inward man. "Ask," says the Saviour, "and ye shall *receive*, that your joy may be full."

Thus his grace shall be sufficient for you even in Prosperity. But a Christian should not only be concerned to use the world as not abusing it; he should not only be anxious to avoid the evils of his condition; but to exercise its virtues, and perform its duties, and sanctify its resources.—And the

III. Part of our subject calls upon you to IMPROVE THE ADVANTAGES OF PROSPERITY.

This is to be exemplified in three things. Gratitude. Beneficence. And Enjoyment. The first regards God. The second, our fellow-creatures. The third, ourselves.

First, you are to improve your Prosperity in a way of *gratitude*. God is to be owned as the author of all. The streams of comfort are many, and flow in various channels; but with him is the fountain of life. "Do not err, my beloved brethren: every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." The silver and the gold are his. However you have obtained it, whether from inheritance, or the legacies of friendship, or the labour of your own hands. He it is that giveth you power to get wealth. And your prosperity lacketh its firmest support, its loveliest ornament, its sweetest relish, if you do not acknowledge in it the Providence of him, whose blessing alone maketh rich and addeth no sorrow with it. Is this acknowledgment made? And is it real? And is it constant? And is it fervent? What would you think of a dependant who had no claim on your bounty; whom you not only relieved, but supported, and supported in affluence; being not only attentive to his necessities, but meeting all his wishes—what would you think of such a dependant, if he should never call upon you, never send to you, never speak of you favourably to others, never think of you—but should take all this goodness as a matter of right, rather than of kindness, and act as if he would have all around him to believe that it was of his own producing or purchasing? How soon would you discontinue your unacknowledged favours; and how hateful would his conduct appear, not only to yourself, but to every one who witnessed it!

Yet how little is God owned. We sacrifice to our own net, and burn incense to our own drag. We ascribe our success to the wisdom of our own understanding; or the power of our own arm; or the interest we have in the favour of our fellow-mortals; or we take it, as the effect of chance, while God is not in all our thoughts. "Therefore," says God, "I will return and take away my corn in the time thereof; and my wine in the season thereof; for she did not know I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal." This is

a trying method to bring us to reflection; but it is often necessary. Continued enjoyment seems to give a kind of prescription; at least, it makes us forget our reliance and obligation. We are struck with what is new and out of course; while we overlook what is regular and habitual. Whereas this should be the grand reason for your praise; for the claim arises not from our benefits being occasional, but frequent and constant; new every morning and every moment. How soon could the Great Ruler and Benefactor convince you that he is not obliged to continue what you deem your own; and that he can, as easily as justly, recal what he has given. That this may not be the case, sanctify the Lord God in your thoughts. Think of your desert. Compare your condition with that of others. And while you see that the lines have fallen to you in pleasant places, and that you have a goodly heritage, say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." The beginning of some of you was small. You remember a time when you had no inheritance, no not so much as to set your foot on; and had your subsequent enlargement been foretold, you would have exclaimed, with the doubting nobleman, "If the Lord should make windows in heaven, might such a thing be." Surely *you* will follow the example of Jacob, who said, "Lord, I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant: for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands. Surely you will retire with David before the Lord, and say, "O Lord God, what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord God; but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come; and is this the manner of man, O Lord God?"

Secondly, You are to improve your prosperity in a way of *beneficence*. In this respect you are favoured above many of your brethren. Their ear is not heavy that it cannot hear; but their hand is shortened that it cannot save. They see wants and miseries which only distress them; for they have only the disposition to relieve. But you can indulge: you have the power. Value the substance you possess on this account.—And remember also, that you have it for this very purpose. In the bestowment, God looked beyond yourselves; and designed to make you not only the subjects of his goodness, but the instruments; not only the recipients, but the diffusers. And how can you neglect to impart relief and

comfort to others, while God is perpetually communicating to you? and your condition, as well as your religion, cries, "Freely ye have received, freely give." This is the way to have your possessions blessed. This is the way also to have them increased. "Give alms of such things as you have, and behold all things are clean unto you." "The liberal soul deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things shall he stand." "Charge them that are rich in this world that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."

The objects of your charity are numberless. Some of these have preferable claims; but none of them are to be excluded. "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them that are of the household of faith." There are the fatherless and the widows to visit; and the sick to heal; and the naked to clothe; and the hungry to feed. "The poor you have always with you:" and if you have the ability to succour, and withhold relief, your religion would perplex an inspired Apostle. "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth."

But there are also the careless to awaken; the ignorant to instruct; the vicious to reclaim; and the backsliding to restore. The soul is of supreme importance; and it becomes us peculiarly to aid in supporting those institutions, and exertions, which have in view the spiritual and eternal welfare of men. Even these require much pecuniary assistance; and it is the highest honour that can be conferred upon money, that it is employed in carrying on the concerns of the Gospel. These have nobly multiplied in our day; and they occasion frequent applications to your liberality.

But surely you cannot complain of this frequency. It shows the improved state of your beloved country, religiously considered; and Christians should deem those the best times in which the best cause flourishes most. Surely you would not wish to bring back the state of things a century ago, when, for a year together, avarice and selfishness might have escaped these evangelical vexations. Have you not yourselves been accessary to this improvement? Have you not been praying that God's kingdom

may come, and that his word may have free course and be glorified? And will you complain or rejoice when those prayers are answered? When you offered them, did you suppose that what you implored was to be carried on by miracles or by means? If by means, did you stipulate in these prayers that God should employ the instrumentality of others, and not require your own? Or, did you not mean to place yourselves at his disposal, and to ask, as the work was going on, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" This must have been your meaning if you prayed sincerely and earnestly; and consistency requires, if you would not be condemned out of your own mouth, every sacrifice in your power. And how much is in the power of some of you! And how would your efficiency be increased, if you would be satisfied with a decent distinction above the vulgar, instead of being splendid; if you would avoid every extravagance and superfluousness in your mode of living; if you would exercise a little of that self-denial, which, after all, is the principal test of real benevolence.

Many rules have been laid down, as to the proportion of your estate or income which should be dedicated to beneficence. If conscience was not so often asleep, or if when awake it had any chance of being heard in the same hour with the love of money, the degree might safely be left to every man's own mind. Nothing however can be more just and reasonable than the injunction of the Apostle, "Let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him." This rule is, we fear, seldom observed. Yea some, by a perverse process, feel the disposition diminishing as the ability increases. They give not only less in proportion, but less in reality than they once did. In their contributions, as well as in their qualities, there is a gradation from gold to silver, and from silver to copper. Once they hardly thought it worth while to be covetous. They had little to set up in that character with. But wealth increased, and they soon began to hoard. Nor is it to be supposed that their eagerness to accumulate is declining with age. The less time they have to keep, the harder they are determined to hold; for, as Young says, "there is a dying grasp as well as a dying gasp."

> "Of other tyrants short the strife;
> But avarice is king for life:
> The despot twists with hard control
> Eternal fetters round the soul."

But, with enlarged circumstances, be ye also enlarged. This is the case with a few we have the pleasure to know. Their fortune is a blessing to the neighbourhood and the nation. Their rising in life resembles the rising of the sun: the elevation illuminates and enlivens and fertilizes; and joy springs from its beams. Their wealth is like the dew, raised indeed from the earth, but only to be filtrated from its grossness, and to descend in silent refreshment, and vigour, and life. So it was with Job. He was the greatest man in the east; and he was also the most generous. His substance is mentioned; but it was not his possession, but his use of it that rendered him so estimable. I envy not the bosom of that man who can hear without emotion his touching and eloquent appeal. "If I did despise the cause of my man-servant, or of my maid-servant, when they contended with me; what then shall I do when God riseth up; and, when he visiteth, what shall I answer him? Did not he that made me in the womb make him? and did not one fashion us in the womb? If I have withheld the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail; or have eaten my morsel myself alone, and the fatherless have not eaten thereof; (for from my youth he was brought up with me, as with a father, and I have guided her from my mother's womb:) if I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering; if his loins have not blessed me, and if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep; if I have lifted up my hand against the fatherless, when I saw my help in the gate: then let mine arm fall from my shoulder-blade, and mine arm be broken from the bone." David also had acquired much wealth: but hear his acknowledgment. "Now I have prepared with all my might, for the house of my God, the gold for things to be made of gold, and the silver for things of silver, and the brass for things of brass, the iron for things of iron, and wood for things of wood: onyx-stones, and stones to be set, glistening stones, and of divers colours, and all manner of precious stones, and marble stones in abundance. Moreover, because I have set my affection to the house of my God, I have of mine own proper good, of gold and silver, which I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house, even three thousand talents of gold, of the gold of Ophir, and seven thousand talents of refined silver, to overlay the walls of the houses withal: the gold for things of gold, and the silver for things of

silver, and for all manner of work to be made by the hands of artificers. And who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?" Here indeed was accumulation; but the design of it was not for the pleasure of possessing. It was not for his own aggrandizement, or splendour, or indulgence; or those of his household; but for a moral and religious purpose. It is a sad reflection, especially in our day, for a good man to die wealthy. But if he must die rich let him die rich towards God. Let him not at his last hour testify only his selfish regards. Let the benefactor appear as well as the man; and the Christian as well as the friend and the relation. While he provides for his own, especially those of his own house, let him not forget the Saviour who loved us, and gave himself for us; and whose cause has claims infinitely above all mortal interests.

Thirdly, You are to improve your prosperity, in a way of *Enjoyment*. I need not say that there is a great difference between possession and enjoyment; and that many who have more than heart can wish, have yet no heart to use it. They are hungry in the midst of food; and are parched with thirst, though the stream is at their lip. Solomon more than once notices this wretchedness; and considers it as one of the sorest evils under the sun. It is worthy of observation, that the Latin word for *miserable*, has been applied to designate an individual who possesses, but cannot enjoy. And well may he be called a *miser;* for of all men he is the most mean, and abject, and comfortless. And no one can more oppose the kindness of God in furnishing us with the supplies of his providence. For he obviously designs to show us, that he is concerned, not for our existence only, but for our happiness. He could have supported us by means of food, as disagreeable to our palate as medicine; but he has rendered it grateful and inviting; and though eating is necessary to life, no one eats to avoid death. Our senses might all have been the inlets of pain only, instead of pleasure. Can any one question whether agreeable sounds were intended to delight the ear; or agreeable scents to gratify the smell? Look at the trees in a garden, or an orchard. The fruit could have been produced without the blossom; but in this process his beauty appears in the one, before his bounty is seen in the other; and the eye is charmed as well as the taste. Well therefore does the Apostle say, "He gives us all things richly to enjoy." And there is therefore truth in the remark of the Poet, "To enjoy is to

obey." It is falling in with the indications of God's will; for he has given us an express injunction—"In the day of prosperity rejoice."

Religion, therefore, instead of being an enemy to the *enjoyment* of this state, enjoins it. And it produces what it requires. We are not afraid to advance it as a maxim capable of demonstration, that in proportion as men are religious, they are prepared to relish prosperity; and that though others may possess more, they will enjoy most; for even in this sense, "a little that a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked."

Religion refines and exalts our relish of temporal things. How low and despicable is a life filled up only with sleeping, and eating, and drinking, and trifling! A Christian rises above such an ignoble mode of being. Even in his enjoyments, reason unites with sense; and faith with reason; and devotion with faith. What is material is animated by mind; and what is animal, though its quality be not abolished, loses its grossness by intercourse with intellect and spirit. The earth grows richer by the reflections and touches of all that is heavenly. The rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley acquire a kind of sacredness and divinity in their fragrance aud beauty, when they remind us of Him who is altogether lovely; and the charms of creation are hallowed and felt as means of grace, while they bring us into communion with the Creator, addressed and adored in language almost inspired—

> "These are thy glorious works, Parent of good—
> Almighty! Thine this universal frame,
> Thus wondrous fair: Thyself how wondrous then!"

—And thus religion also enlarges as well as improves the enjoyment of prosperity. We readily allow that it forbids licentiousness and excess. But so does reason. So does health. Yea, so does pleasure itself. The moderate use of the indulgences of prosperity, unspeakably exceeds in enjoyment the intemperate use of the glutton and drunkard. The very restraints which religion imposes are useful and necessary to give the more lively and potent relish to our participations. For who needs to be informed that the measure of enjoyment corresponds with the strength and freshness of the desire or the appetite? Thus the pleasure of eating depends upon hunger; and where no degree of this is felt, the most delicious viands would be insipid. The

full soul loaths the honeycomb, but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet. Thus the unwearied do not welcome repose; but the sleep of a labouring man is sweet. It is therefore easy to see that temperance is the handmaid of enjoyment. By not impairing our appetites and desires, it keeps us from the languor and irksomeness of the dissipated; and by maintaining uninjured the capacities for enjoyment, it really cherishes and increases the resources which excess spoils and destroys.

—But this is not the only way in which religion befriends the enjoyment of prosperity. We must remark its moral influence in rectifying our dispositions and removing the causes of disquietude and dissatisfaction. All outward things affect us according to the state of the mind. It is well known to every man, that a scene which delights us at one time, will be perfectly uninteresting, if not repulsive, at another. The object in this case is the same, but the medium through which it appears, and the feelings in which it is received, are changed. No one can deny but that the agreeable impression of outward things is impaired by infirmity and sickness of body. But many are not aware, that it may be equally injured by a disorder of the soul. Yet so it is. A pain in the tooth, or in the joint, will no more preclude enjoyment than the workings of jealousy, or suspicion, or envy, or anger, or revenge. Under the corrosion of these evils, a man must be wretched in all the entertainments of a palace, and all the scenery of a paradise. But religion forbids and subdues these self-tormenting, as well as vile tempers. It teaches the man to love his neighbour as himself. It enables him to rejoice in another's welfare. It renders him an Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile; and enables him to confide in others by judging of them from his own feelings of sincerity and harmlessness.—Why is that man so cheerless and uneasy? Is he poor? Has he been robbed of his estate? Look at his portion. What one more thing can he desire? But all will not bend to his humour. All will not respect him as the first man in the neighbourhood. He has the sorrow of the world that worketh death. A Christian does not feel this disease. He is meek and lowly in heart; and finds rest unto his soul.—Here is another dissatisfied and peevish mortal. Nothing pleases him. He reflects upon every one around him. His house is the hospital of ill-nature, and every ward is filled with complaint. What is the cause?

He will not own it: but guilt makes him fretful. He is conscious of some duty he has neglected; some sin which he has committed; some restitution which he ought to make; some connexion which he ought to succour. This consciousness makes him uneasy. When censured, he knows he deserves it; when praised, he feels he is unworthy of it. He is a burden to himself. But a good man, says Solomon, shall be satisfied from himself. His rejoicing, though not his dependence, is the testimony of his conscience. He is not free from infirmity; but he can say, with David, "I was upright before Him, and have kept myself from mine iniquity."

Religion makes a man grateful: and gratitude is a lively and cheerful temper: and though to be under obligation to the mean and worthless, or to an enemy, be trying; nothing can be more delightful than to feel and acknowledge what we owe to one we greatly esteem and love, and who is worthy to be praised. David therefore speaks of the "pleasant harp:" and says, "Praise ye the Lord; for the Lord is good: sing praises unto his name; for it is pleasant." And to show what a connection this exercise has with happiness, we are assured that it will continue in heaven, and perfect the enjoyment of the glorified.

Religion also makes a man beneficent; and this also contributes to his happiness. What do the selfish know of the pleasure of prosperity, compared with those who love to do good and to communicate? Is it not more blessed to give than to receive? Can any gratification be so pure, so cordial, so divine, so fresh and interesting in review, as that which is reflected back into the bosom from the feelings, and tears, and joy, of the partakers of your bounty? What voluptuary from his most studied and costly procurements ever tasted luxury like Job's? "When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me: because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor: and the cause which I knew not I searched out."

There is one view more to be taken of the subject; it is, the confidence in God which religion inspires. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee." Why do not many enjoy

what God has given them? They are anxious and foreboding. They suspend their satisfaction on some future occurrence—they may meet with losses—they may come to want: thus "they are not in quiet from the fear of evil." But the soul of the Christian dwells at ease. He knows not what a day may bring forth; nor does he desire it. He has nothing to do with events. He lives by the day; and knows that he is under the providence of his heavenly Father, who is able and engaged to make all things work together for his good.

But this implies the previous adjustment of a case most awfully interesting. Belshazzar's entertainment was destroyed as soon as he saw a hand-writing against the wall. *Then* neither the wine, nor the music, nor the company of a thousand of his lords, had the least power to charm: and though he was ignorant of the meaning of the inscription, he foreboded evil; and the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another. If a man was at the most enchanting banquet, with a sword hanging over his head by a small and rotten ligature, he could not enjoy it; or if he did, it must be by forgetting his jeopardy while yet his danger continued. The sinner is the enemy of God, and the child of wrath; and there is but a step between him and eternal death. The thought of this—the reflection that I must soon, and may every moment exchange all my good things here for the worm that never dies, and the fire that never shall be quenched—why surely this is sufficient to turn all my joy into sadness and horror. To enjoy therefore, in this state, I must forget my exposure. Conscience tells me I have no right to take comfort. I must therefore creep forth and steal, while conscience is asleep. But will it, can it sleep always? How quickly may it be awakened! And then trembling takes hold upon me. My enjoyment, if it deserves the name, depends therefore on delusion; and this delusion is at the mercy of a thousand disturbers. If therefore I am not always in bondage, I am always subject to bondage through fear of death; and there is no peace, saith my God, unto the wicked. But the Christian being justified by faith, has peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. *His* anger is turned away; and as soon as *He* smiles every thing smiles. In his favour is life. Tell me, ye who are unpardoned and unrenewed—Can you, you who have no hope of a better world, and no certainty of continuing an instant in this—Can you enjoy

the comforts of life like one who knows that whenever he dies, to die is gain? That he has in heaven a better and an enduring substance? That he has a covenant right to all he possesses? That it comes to him with the good will of his God and Saviour? saying, as he partakes—"Eat thy bread with cheerfulness, and drink thy wine with a merry heart, for God hath accepted thy works?"

"He looks abroad into the varied field
Of nature, and though poor perhaps, compared
With those whose mansions glitter in his sight,
Calls the delightful scenery all his own.
His are the mountains, and the valleys his,
And the resplendent rivers. His to enjoy
With a propriety that none can feel,
But who, with filial confidence inspired,
Can lift to heaven an unpresumptuous eye,
And smiling say—'My Father made them all!'
Are they not his by a peculiar right,
And by an emphasis of interest his,
Whose eye they fill with tears of holy joy,
Whose heart with praise, and whose exalted mind
With worthy thoughts of that unwearied love,
That planned, and built, and still upholds a world
So clothed with beauty for rebellious man?
Yes—ye may fill your garners, ye that reap
The loaded soil, and ye may waste much good
In senseless riot; but ye will not find
In feasts, or in the chase, in song, or dance,
A liberty like his, who, unimpeached
Of usurpation, and to no man's wrong,
Appropriates nature as his Father's work,
And has a richer use of yours than you."

We have seen how religion befriends Prosperity, by raising and increasing its enjoyments. But you ask, can it *preserve?* Yes. It insures the continuance as far as it is good for us. But we are not going to deny that every thing here is precarious. "Truly light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun: but if a man live many years, and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness, for they be many. All that cometh is vanity." Yes, your treasure on earth moth and rust may corrupt, or thieves break through and steal. Your health may be exchanged for sickness. Your friends may be converted into enemies. Your relations may be carried down to the dust. The soft and delicate hand may be forced to ply the oar of labour. You may not be known of those

your bounty has fed. And after the morning sunshine, the noon or the evening of life may set in with dark waters and thick clouds of the sky. Is such vicissitude impossible? Improbable? Unfrequent? Let the day in which we live answer this.

And such desolation religion may not interfere to prevent. Is it then useless? And does it keep aloof when we need its aid? No. When it does not rescue us from the evil day, it prepares us for it. What it does not prevent, it softens. What it does not hinder, it sanctifies. It indemnifies the sufferer by inward supports, and future expectation. It renders every loss a gain. It turns the curse into a blessing.

What will the worldling do in the loss of *his* prosperity? His portion is gone. His hope is wrecked. His heart is desolate. Refuge fails him. He curses God and his king, and looks upward. Or he lies down in his shame, and his soul prefers strangling and death rather than life. His time ends with one hell, and his eternity begins with another. But to the upright there ariseth light in the darkness. God is his refuge and strength: a very present help in trouble. He feels, but he is not miserable. He is perplexed, but not in despair. He is cast down, but not destroyed. He is laid waste, but he is not resourceless: "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places."

But this falls in with the subject of our next Lecture; which will show us the Christian in Adversity.

LECTURE VII.

THE CHRISTIAN, IN ADVERSITY.

"*In the day of adversity consider.*"—Eccles. vii. 14.

The condition in which we have recently viewed the Christian is not a very common one. We felt the difficulty; and in the course of the Lecture, were often led to make the prosperous the subjects of reflection, rather than the objects of address. For when a minister enters his pulpit, how few among the godly can he see in his audience, that are set on the high places of the earth, and have the waters of a full cup wrung out unto them, and have more than heart can wish!

But, of this kind, we feel no difficulty in the present service. We are no more at a loss to find persons to address, than topics to enlarge upon, when we treat of affliction. The inheritance of griefs is as sure to mortals, as the laws of nature are inviolable—"Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward." Some parts of his destiny are less exposed, and less painful, than others; but after every concession, life is a warfare, and earth is a vale of tears.

"*I* hang the world in mourning?" It is Solomon, who saw its most favoured aspects, and enjoyed its most envied resources: it is all history; it is universal observation; it is individual experience, that proclaims, "All is vanity, and vexation of spirit." Who has purchased an assurance from accident and disease? Who has not enemies that oppose him? Cares that corrode him? Fears that dismay him? Disappointments that confound him? Who does not find in his comforts, the elements of sorrow? In his possessions, the sources of danger? In his distinctions, the excitements of envy and detraction? In his affections, the seeds of anxiety and anguish? In his connexions, the pledges of apprehension and bereavement?

"E'en roses grow on thorns,
And honey wears a sting."

Sufferer! You think your case is singular, and you are often urged to exclaim, "*I* am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath." "Behold and see, if there be sorrow like unto *my* sorrow." But this is the language of self-importance, and ignorance. "For there hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man."

But you ask, "How is it, not with the man, but with the *Christian?* Has the favourite of heaven no indulgences, or, at least, no exemptions on earth? Surely, if they had it in their power: surely, the friend would secure the companion of his bosom, and the father the child of his love, from every thing hurtful and distressing. And if God was my father and my friend, he *could* by one volition of his will set me at ease; and *would* he suffer me to walk in the midst of trouble, to be straitened in want, and to pine away with sickness? If I am His, why am I thus?" Yet David said, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous." And our Saviour says to his disciples, "In the world ye shall have tribulation." And it is the *Christian* we are to view, this morning,

In Adversity.

It is to "the elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father," that the Apostle Peter addressed himself, when to break the force of their surprise, he said, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you." No. Religion does not preclude the evil day; but it prepares us for it; and shows itself to most advantage, when all other resources *must* fail.

We have a thousand instructions and admonitions concerning the spirit and demeanour of the Christion in tribulation; but they may all be summed up in the words of our text, "*In the day of adversity consider.*"

We enter upon our subject with one important remark. Whatever the people of the world may think of it, the religion of Christ is "a reasonable service." Nothing can be more distinguishable from groundless belief, from the enthusiasm of ignorant impulses, from a mere mass of unintelligible feelings. It commences in the renewing of the mind. It is carried on through the medium of thought. Nothing

can be moral that does not arise from design, and is not influenced by motive. Spiritual agencies are not like the cures of a charm, of whose efficiency no account can be given. They are not like the forced motions of a machine insensible of its workings and results. Neither are they like the operations of the physical powers in the human body: these are carried on independently of the mind and will. The digestive action, the secretion of the fluids, the circulation of the blood, go on as well, if not better, when we are asleep, as when we are awake. This, it would appear, is too much the notion some entertain of the work of the Spirit. But this is the perversion of the language of Scripture. According to the sacred writers, as to religious influences, we are not only the subjects, but the instruments. What is done in us, is done by us. God is the author of every thing good: our progress is from him; but he does not *carry* us along in the way everlasting, but enables us to *walk*. He works in us; but it is to *will* and to *do*. We are not only impressed, but employed. Faith and repentance are the gifts of God; yet we believe and repent, and not God.

This being premised, we observe, that religion arises from *consideration*. Therefore, God, complaining of the Jews, says, "My people do not consider." Therefore he cries, "Consider your ways." Therefore David says, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies." This extends to each part of religion, as well as the whole. The Christian's abhorrence of sin is not a thoughtless aversion—"How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" His godly sorrow is not a thoughtless grief—"They shall look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn." His confidence is not a thoughtless trust—"They that know thy name will put their trust in thee." His hope is not a presumptuous expectation—He is "ready to give a reason of the hope that is in him." His conduct in trouble is not the result of a natural hardihood, a brutal apathy, a careless desperation—it is the effect of thought, scriptural thought, sanctified thought—"*In the day of adversity consider.*"

Christian! there are many things you ought to consider in the day of trouble; but we shall confine your attention to two only. The DESIGN of affliction. And the RELIEF of affliction.

I. The DESIGN OF AFFLICTION, to regulate your DUTY. And

II. The RELIEF OF AFFLICTON, to support your HOPE.

The one will keep you from "despising the chastening of the Lord:" the other, from "fainting when you are rebuked of him."

I. Consider the DESIGN OF AFFLICTION.

Without this, you cannot discharge the duty of the condition. For what is this duty? It is not only to possess your souls in patience—it is not only to submit yourselves under the mighty hand of God—but to acquiesce in the pleasure of the Almighty. It is not to say, "This is my grief, and I must bear it;" but "Here I am, let him do what seemeth him good." Nothing less is required of you, as Christians, than a willing, cheerful resignation. But this can only flow from a knowledge of him that smiteth you. You may yield, but you cannot acquiesce, without confidence in him. You may, with David, be dumb and open not your mouth, because he doeth it; and you may say, with Watts,

"Peace, all our angry passions: then
Let each rebellious sigh
Be silent at his sovereign will,
And every murmur die—"

—But you cannot render a voluntary, and cheerful, and grateful resignation, till you see the righteousness, the wisdom, and, above all, the *kindness* of his dispensations towards you. Therefore you are commanded to *hear* the rod—What does it say? "And in the day of adversity *consider*"—to consider the ends he has in view in afflicting you. What are these ends? They all show that resignation is the most dutiful and becoming thing in the world. They are all founded in our exigencies and advantages: but they are various; and none of them must be lost sight of. For a Christian will often find it necessary to turn to each of them before he can obtain an answer to the prayer, "Show me wherefore thou contendest with me?" They include Correction—Prevention—Trial—Instruction—and Usefulness.

First, *Correction.* How absurd it is to suppose that God will suffer his children to act improperly, and not reprove them! The very discipline shows that they are not aban-

doned. It is the language of the paternal heart—"How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together."

No; He "will not cast away his people whom he foreknew;" but this is the law of the house—"If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes."

And these stripes regard sins of omission, as well as of commission. For God enjoins, as well as forbids; and we offend by refusing his orders, as well as by opposing his prohibitions. Yea, further. They regard the state of the heart, as well as the conduct of the life—for "the backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways." Where no miscarriages have appeared to our fellow Christians, what a fall is there often in our feelings and our motives! What a decay of devotion! What a coldness of love! What a want of gratitude! What a loss of confidence! What a waste of time! What a misimprovement of privileges!—How does this enlarge the sphere of correction! And when all these calls for the rod are taken into the account, have we any reason to wonder that we are afflicted? Surely the cause for astonishment lies on the other side—that we so often escape; and that our chastisements are not only so few, but so gentle and tender. "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him." "Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more: that which I see not, teach thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more."

Secondly, *Prevention.* It is proverbially and truly said, that prevention is better than cure. In no case will this more apply, than in our moral failures. Repentance will not always fully recover us as to this world; or hinder the natural effects of our conduct from being entailed upon us for life. David fell by temptation, and was *reclaimed* and forgiven; yet his child died, and the sword never departed from his house; and his sin, in the scandal and mischief, was ever before him. Joseph was assailed by the same foe; but he was *preserved;* and thus sustained his peace of mind, and the approbation of his conduct, and the value of his reputation, and the usefulness of his character, and the

benefit of his example. Hezekiah's "heart *was* lifted up;" and as the consequence, "wrath came upon him and upon all Judah." Paul was in danger from the same quarter. From his peculiar privileges he was exposed to high-mindedness; and we know not what injuries might have resulted from it to himself and others: but he was *not* elated. It would seem that he was ignorant of his jeopardy; but he had one to watch over him, who was wiser than himself, and could see effects in their causes. And how did he secure him? "Lest," says he, "I should be exalted above measure, through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan, to buffet me." What this particularly was, we cannot determine; but it was—and this is sufficient for our purpose—it was a very sharp and painful affliction; and so anguished him. that he "besought the Lord thrice," that is, frequently and fervently, that it might depart from him.

Ah, Christian, if you could see things as they really are in their moral relations, how many of your sufferings might be explained upon this principle. You have perhaps examined yourself; and though you have always enough in your general unworthiness and imperfections to render you vulnerable to trouble, yet you have been able to discover no one duty that you have knowingly neglected; no one sin that you have knowingly committed; no one idol that you have knowingly adored. But the case was this. You were not vain; but you were becoming so; and it was needful to withdraw the adulation and the incense in time. You were not avaricious; but you were becoming so; and it was necessary to lay waste the gain which made you think of accumulation. You had not worshipped the creature; but the growing fondness would soon have made you kneel, had not the desire of your eyes been taken away with a stroke.

We are little aware, now, of the obligations we are under, for our preservation, to the goodness of God; and the reason is, because the prevention which hinders the injury, hinders the discovery. But there are no blessings for which we shall be more thankful in the world of light, than preserving mercies; and we shall then perceive that the greater part of these were administered by afflictions. These often answered the prayer, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." These checked us; but it was in going astray. The hindrance was suddenly interposed;

but the danger was immediate, and the next movement would have been into a pitfall. It was sharp as a hedge of thorns; but it was necessary to pierce us back. It was impenetrable as a wall; but it was necessary to make us despair of going on. At first, we felt that we did well to be angry; but a pause was admitted, and the disappointment induced reflection, and we said, "I will go and return to my first husband, for then it was better with me than now."

Thirdly, *Probation.* It is for this reason that afflictions are so often called trials and temptations in the Scripture. They are in the nature of tests applied to our principles and dispositions; they are experiments employed to discover and display the reality and the degree of the evil or good there is in us. Moses tells the Jews, the design of the discipline to which they had been so long subjected in the wilderness, was to prove them, and to know what was in their heart, and whether they would keep his commandments or no. And without this process, others would not have believed, nor could they have believed themselves, that they were so unbelieving, so rebellious, so perverse, so ungrateful, as they were now demonstrated to be. Job was charged with not serving God for nought; and the accuser of the brethren said, "Hast thou not made an hedge about him, and about all that he hath on every side? But put forth thy hand now, and touch all that he hath; and he will curse thee to thy face." How was this to be decided? God stripped him of all; of his cattle, of his servants, of his children. But instead of resentment and reviling, he worships, and says, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; *blessed* be the name of the Lord." "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life," says the defeated but insolent foe: but, "put forth now thine hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face." And, lo! he is covered with sore boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head; and he takes a potsherd to scrape himself withal; and he sits among the ashes. But his lips mutter no reflection upon Providence. And when his wife, amazed at his enduring, asks, "Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God, and die"—what says the sufferer? "Shall we receive good at the Lord's hand, and shall we not receive evil? In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." A friend is born for adversity. But this last solace fails

him, and his connexions, instead of soothing him, reproach and condemn. But even now he looks up and cries, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

Was he then perfect in the trial? He bore the proof; and was evinced to be gold. But he was not free from dross. He partially failed in the process—and even cursed the day of his birth. And he, even he, left a complete example to be furnished, by one who was fairer than the children of men; who did no evil, neither was guile found in his mouth; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously, saying, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done." When the prince of this world came, even in his hour and power of darkness, he found nothing in him; no guilt to accuse him of; no corruption to operate upon. Agitate pure water, and no defilement will appear; but let the sea that has filthiness at the bottom be troubled, and however clean and clear it looks above, its waves will cast up mire and dirt. Afflictions are to the soul, like the rains to the house: we suspected no apertures in the roof, till the droppings through told the tale. The effects of these trials therefore are always humbling to the Christian. He is convinced by them that he has much less grace than he imagined: he is often rendered a wonder as well as a grief to himself. "I little thought I was so proud, till I was required to stoop; or so impatient, till I was required to wait; or so easily provoked, till I met with such an offence; or was so rooted to earth, till so much force was exerted to detach me from it."—Such must be the language of every attentive and faithful self-observer, when he reviews the trying scenes through which he has passed. We resemble the birds: they build in the lovely and inviting part of the year; and the foliage hides their nests: but in the winter, when the leaves have dropped off, their nests appear. Our retreats and delights in prosperity are discovered in adversity: and many a passenger can see where we rested when we made not God our trust. When we have, *with* the Lord, health, and honour, and affluence, and friends; it is not easy to determine whether we are making *him* or *these* our dependance and our portion. But when these are removed, the case is decided. If we were relying upon them, we sink; but if while we were using them, we were cleaving to him, our support will remain;

and embracing him firmer than before, we shall break through every despondence and say, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

Fourthly, *Instruction.* By long usage affliction has been spoken of as a school. It is indeed a dear one; but there is none like it. In this lecture-room the lessons are accompanied with experiments; and the great Teacher, by facts as well as words, says, "There—*There*—See what an evil and bitter thing sin is. See what a poor and vain thing the world is: how it attracts its votaries to show its emptiness, and elevates only to depress. See what a precarious thing friendship is! See what human helpers can do for you! Men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie. Cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of? Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God; which made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that therein is; which keepeth truth for ever."

These instances appeal to the conscience, as well as the understanding. They serve not only to explain the subjects, but to quicken our attention. They produce a silence in the mind; a solemnity of soul; a softness of heart, that prepares us to receive divine truth. "*Then* he openeth the ears of men and sealeth their instruction." These are the lessons, that make the deepest impression; that are the most easily and firmly remembered; that are the most useful and profitable in their *effects.*

"Blessed," says David, "is the man whom thou chastenest and teachest out of thy law." Nor did he speak from reasoning or faith only, but from experience: "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes." Luther says, "I never knew the meaning of the word till I was afflicted." "We fear," says Bishop Hall, "our best friends: for my part, I have learned more of God and myself in one week's extremity, than the prosperity of a whole life had taught me before."

Lastly, *Usefulness.* Affliction gives a man the tongue of the learned, that he may know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary. It produces that sympathy which arises most powerfully from experience; and which

indeed can hardly be found without it. In vain you repair in the hour of trouble to those who never knew what an anguish meant. They will not listen to your tale of wo. It does not interest them—they do not understand it—they are unacquainted with grief. But he who has borne the smart himself, will not, cannot, with a careless mien and an unfeeling heart, listen to a sufferer who cries, "Pity me, pity me, O ye my friends, for the hand of God hath touched me." "Be kind," said Moses to the Jews, "be kind to strangers, for ye know the heart of a stranger; for ye were strangers in a strange land." In this way, the Redeemer himself is not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities: he was in all points tempted like as we are: and in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able also to succour them that are tempted.

But nothing strikes like a fact. The oak scathed with lightning attracts the notice of passengers more than all the other trees of the forest. Trouble awakens attention, and draws forth inquiry. The Christian is never so well circumstanced, to "glorify the Lord, as in the fires." There he can display the tenderness of his care, the truth of his promise, the excellency of the Gospel, the supports of divine grace. In the review of my own varied intercourse with society, I confess nothing so vividly and powerfully affects me, as what I recollect to have met with from pious individuals exemplifying the spirit and resources of Christianity under bodily disease, and the losses, and bereavements, and disappointments of life. O when I have visited such a martyr—such a witness for God; when I have found him standing in the evil day like a rock in a raging current with sunshine on its brow; when I have observed him, full of tribulation in the world, and of peace in Christ; mourning more for his sins than his sorrows; afraid of dishonouring his profession by impatience and unbelief; more concerned to have his crosses sanctified, than to have them removed; turning a tearful eye towards the inflicter and saying, "I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me; just and true are all thy ways, O thou King of saints—he hath done all things well;"—when I have witnessed religion—and I have witnessed it—accomplishing achievements like these, I have said to it, as I withdrew—"I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee."

As the sky is only decked with stars in the night, so the Christian shines most in the darkness of affliction; and by nothing is he so impressive as by the exercise of the passive graces. And this should reconcile you to the will of God in your sufferings. You are not to be selfish. You are not detached individuals; but parts of a community, civil and religious. And you should think yourselves honoured and happy in serving your generation; and the manner in which you are to serve it, you are to leave to God. People sometimes express a wish to be useful; but it must be in their own way. They wish to do something, but their meaning is to do something that is public and striking; originating, perhaps, some institution, or heading some new party—doing something that excites notice and noise. Here the motive *may* be good, but it should be peculiarly examined; for exertions of this kind fall in with the principles of our nature, the love of action, and the desire of fame. "But they also serve that wait"—And they also serve that suffer. You may be called to retire rather than to act. You may be usefully employed in the quiet duties of domestic life, or in the soberness and sameness of business. Yea, you may be detached from your callings, and be confined by accident or sickness, and have not only wearisome nights, but months of *vanity* appointed you. So you may deem them—and suppose that you are going to be laid aside, when you are perhaps approaching the most profitable portion of your lives. For there, in the house of affliction, and on the bed of languishing; there, the minister who visits you shall be taught how to preach; your fellow-christians shall be edified; the young convert shall be encouraged and confirmed; the careless neighbour shall be impressed—or, even in the want of human observers, who can tell but other witnesses may look down and adore the displays of divine grace in your sufferings, and glorify God in you. For we are "a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men."

II. In the day of adversity consider your RELIEF.

This is necessary to support your hope, and to keep you from being swallowed up of over-much sorrow. You may feel. You must feel. "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyious, but grievous." It does not depend upon us to be unaffected with certain events. We are made

susceptible of pain, and of sorrow: religion cannot require us to attempt to throw off our nature, and to say to our Maker, "Why hast thou made me thus?" There is no giving up what we do not prize; no bearing what we do not feel; no enduring what we do not suffer. Correction is founded on our aversion to misery; and without the sensibility, the discipline cannot answer any of the moral purposes for which it is designed; all of which are included in our being made perfect through suffering.

Yet there is an extreme on the right hand, as well as on the left. As we are not to "despise the chastening of the Lord," so neither are we to "faint when we are rebuked of him." To the upright there ariseth light in the darkness: and he has resources which are not only sufficient to moderate his sorrow, but even to turn his sorrow into joy. This is the high ground we take for a suffering Christian; to "glory also in tribulation;" and to "count it all joy when" he falls "into divers temptations." We are far from saying that he always can do this actually; but we are not to take his duty from his experience, but to endeavour to bring his experience to his duty. What is not invariably his attainment should be constantly his aim.—To aid you in aspiring after this distinction,

Consider, *First*, That your afflictions are not *peculiar*. "The same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren who are in the world." And will you refuse to drink of the cup they drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism they are baptized with? Is Providence in your case to deviate from the treatment of all the other branches of the household of faith? "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." To which of the saints in scripture or in history will you turn, in refutation of this decision? "What son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?" In vain you allege that you are acquainted with persons truly godly who are not afflicted. It is no easy thing to determine who *are* truly godly. Besides—*Have* they not been afflicted? *Will* they not be afflicted? Are you sure they *are not* afflicted even *now?* The rod is not always composed of the same twigs. There are griefs relative as well as personal; mental as well as corporeal; imaginary as well as real; invisible as well as apparent. "The heart knoweth his own bitterness." There are crosses which cannot be displayed. There are groanings which

cannot be uttered—He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him—

> "The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
> Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown.
> No traveller e'er reached that blest abode,
> Who found not thorns and briers in his road.
> The world may dance along the flowery plain,
> Cheered as they go by many a sprightly strain—
> Where nature has her mossy velvet spread,
> With unshod feet they yet securely tread:
> Admonished, scorn the caution and the friend;
> Bent upon pleasure, heedless of its end.
> But he who knew what human hearts would prove,
> How slow to learn the dictates of his love,
> That hard by nature and of stubborn will,
> A life of ease would make them harder still,
> In pity to the sinners he designed
> To rescue from the ruins of mankind,
> Called for a cloud to darken all their years,
> And said, 'Go spend them in the vale of tears.'"

Secondly, Consider that they are not *casual*. Do our fellow-creatures oppose and injure us? They always act freely, and often criminally; yet we are not left to the vices and passions of men. They could have no power at all against us except it were given them from above. Nothing in any of our sufferings occurs by chance—there is no such divinity in the universe. Occurrences may be accidental and contingent with regard to us, who are not acquainted with the plan to be executed and developed; but they are not so with regard to him who sees the end from the beginning, and worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. What takes place without him? "I form the light and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil. I the Lord do all these things." And he strikes no random blows. "He performeth the thing that is appointed for us;" and the appointment is made by one who has not only a right to ordain, but who cannot pervert justice; who is too wise to err; and who loved us so as not to spare his own Son, but delivered him up for us all. We are hallowed, we are required to cast all our care on him, with the assurance that he careth for us. And is not his attention, his solicitude—(how condescending is God in his language!)—sufficient to relieve our minds? How delightful is it to sit at the feet of the great Teacher, and hear him discourse on the doctrine of Providence! Here we have nothing of the language of infi-

del philosophy. *He* does not represent the Supreme Being as occupied with worlds and whole systems; but overlooking individuals, and minute concerns—*He* did not suppose the Supreme Being capable of perplexity and fatigue—*He* did not think any thing too hard for Infinite Wisdom and Power—*He* did not think it beneath God to govern what was not beneath him to create. Among men, an attention to little things prevents an attention to great things; and an attention to great things prevents an attention to little ones; and no one can equally regard all the claims of the province of government he fills, however limited it may be. But, says Jesus, "*He* maketh *his* sun to rise:" and, *he* "sends forth *his* angels;" and, "a sparrow falls not to the ground without your heavenly Father; and the hairs of your head are all numbered." "Are you not of more value than many sparrows?" "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?"

Exclude this doctrine, and God is a God afar off; there is no foundation for confidence; there is no excitement to devotion: in the darkness of my perplexities and difficulties I group around, and can feel nothing to support me. But by realizing his superintending agency, I bring him near, and by his presence fill what otherwise would be an awful and irksome void. He hears prayer. His interposition is attainable. By being connected with God, every place is rendered holy, every object interesting; every comfort is enriched; and every trial is softened. This principle I take with me into every allotment, every circumstance; and say, "the cup which my Father giveth me, shall I not drink it? It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good. I will cry unto God most high, unto God who performeth all things for me."

Thirdly, Consider that they are not *penal*. When the Israelites came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters, for they were bitter. "And Moses cried unto the Lord; and the Lord showed him a tree, which when he had cast

into the waters, the waters were made sweet." If this was not designed to be a type, it yields us a striking allusion.

"Bitter indeed the waters are
Which in this desert flow;
Though to the eye they promise fair,
They taste of sin and wo."

What is the cure? The Cross—

"The Cross on which the Saviour hung,
And conquered for his saints,—
This is the tree, by faith applied,
That sweetens all complaints.

"Thousands have found the blest effect,
No longer mourn their lot:
While on his sorrows they reflect,
Their own are all forgot."

If the burden of sin be removed, whatever else is laid on us will be felt to be light. And surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed. Hence though his sufferings do not secure us from suffering, they change the nature and design of our afflictions: so that, instead of their being punishments, they are corrections; and are inflicted not by the sword of the Judge, but by the rod of a Father. The believer may sometimes misapprehend them, and fearful of their being the messengers of justice, may say unto God, Do not condemn me. But the apprehension is groundless. We are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world. For there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. He has redeemed them from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for them. And being now justified by his blood, they shall be saved from wrath through him. This is the rest wherewith we are to cause the uneasy to rest; and this is the refreshing. He was angry with us, but his anger is turned away: and he comforteth us. And not only so, but we also joy through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

Fourthly, Consider that they are not *unalloyed*. The Apostle seems to enjoin too much when he says, "In every thing give thanks." But there is a reason for it. Take your condition, however trying. Has it no alleviations?

Let candour, let gratitude, let truth examine the circumstances of the case. Is there nothing in the time, nothing in the place, nothing in the manner, nothing in the subject of affliction, that serves to soften its pressure? Do you believe that it might not have been worse? "Hath he smitten him, as he smote those that smote him? or is he slain according to the slaughter of them that are slain by him? In measure, when it shooteth forth, thou wilt debate with it. He stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east wind." Take your case and lay it by the side of your desert. What would you have suffered had he dealt with you after your sins, or rewarded you according to your iniquities?—Place it by the side of the condition of others. You have lost much of your substance; but they have nothing left. You have buried one of your children: the grave has written them childless in the earth. You walk upon crutches: they are bed-ridden. You have months of vanity; but they have wearisome nights, and the multitude of their bones is filled with strong pain.—But O think of the Saviour. Think of his dignity, of his preceding state, of his innocency!—We suffer justly, for we suffer the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done nothing amiss. Yet see him. You suffer partially; he suffered in every part that was capable of passion. You suffer occasionally; and for hours and days of pain, you have weeks and months of ease and pleasure: his sufferings reached from the manger to the cross: "He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." Your sufferings are unforeseen; his were known from the beginning; and he bore them in prospect before he endured them in reality. And whose tongue can express, whose imagination can conceive what he endured when he began to be sore amazed and very heavy? when his soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death? when his sweat was as it were great drops of blood, falling to the ground? when he exclaimed, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

> "Now let our pains be all forgot,
> Our hearts no more repine;
> Our sufferings are not worth a thought,
> When, Lord, compared with thine."

Fifthly, Consider that you are not to bear them *alone*. For he hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." This is a general promise, and necessarily includes

every particular case. But knowing the anxieties and forebodings of the heart, he has been pleased to issue particular assurances with regard to the hour of suffering. "I will be with thee in trouble." "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." Herein his conduct forms a contrast with the friendship of others. A friend is born for adversity: but he oftener raises expectations than realizes them. And Solomon tells us, that "confidence in an unfaithful man, in the time of trouble, is like a broken tooth, or a foot out of joint." These are more than useless. You attempt to use them, and they not only fail, but make you writhe with pain. "To him that is afflicted, pity should be showed of his friend; but he forsaketh the fear of the Almighty." Job found it so, and said, "My brethren have dealt deceitfully as a brook, and as the stream of brooks that pass away." Paul found it so: and though the brethren came to meet him, when he was going to Rome, to appeal unto Cæsar, as far as Appii Forum and the Three Taverns, he complains, "At my first answer no man stood by me, but all men forsook me." But he adds, "Notwithstanding the Lord stood by me and strengthened me." He is true, whoever is treacherous: whoever fails, he is faithful. To this Latimer testified in his last moments. Being fastened to the stake and the fire just about to be kindled, he turned a heavenly countenance towards his fellow-sufferer, and said, "God is faithful, who will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able"—While Ridley answered, "Yes, be of good cheer, brother: he will abate the fury of the flames, or give us strength to abide them." Spilsbury had suffered for conscience' sake, and had been released from his confinement. But when apprehended a second time, he said, seeing his wife and children weeping, "I am not afraid to go to prison now—I found God there the first time." In his flight and dreariness, the vision at Bethel was a privilege beyond all Jacob's expectation and thought. Driven from home, and travelling alone; having no guide to direct him, no defender to protect him, no associate to soothe his mind by communion; a forlorn youth, ruminating on his sad condition, and conflicting with those fears which attend uncertain events—he lights on a certain place, and tarries there all night, because the sun was set. The dark-

ness was his curtains, the ground his bed, and a stone his pillow. There he falls asleep, and sees and hears what encouraged him to the last moment of life. But said he in the morning, "Surely God is in this place, and I knew it not." This ignorance and surprise serve to represent the apprehensions of many of the people of God: they seem to think they shall be found deserted in such situations and difficulties. But he is better than their fears; he surpasses even their hopes. He is there, and no sooner do they call, than he answers, "Here I am."

Yea, he is not only with them really, but peculiarly in the day of trouble. "As one whom his mother comforteth," says he, "so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem." The anxious, tender mother regards all her offspring: but she is most concerned for the poor, weakly, sickly child. The knee, the bosom is for *him:* for *him* is the prepared delicacy, and the noiseless room, and the breathless step, and the frequent watching and leaning over the bed of languishing, and the entreated reception of the offensive draught, accompanied with the sincere assurance, "Ah, my darling child, how gladly would I take it for thee." And thus is it with his afflicted people. They have their special privileges. As their day, so their strength is; and as the sufferings of Christ abound in them, the consolation also aboundeth by Christ: and thousands can testify that they have had clearer discoveries, richer communications, and tenderer supports under their trials than they ever experienced in seasons of ease and prosperity. What want we more? "God," says the church, "is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble: therefore will not we fear though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof." No creature can be a substitute for him; but he is more than a substitute for every creature; and his presence peoples and fertilizes and gladdens the gloomiest desert: "I will allure her and bring her into the wilderness, and *there* will I speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her her vineyards from *thence;* and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing *there.*"—The lamp cannot supply the place of the sun: but you have no reason to complain, if you can say, with Mrs. Rowe,

"Thou dost but take the lamp away
To bless me with unclouded day."

If we faint in the day of adversity, it is by losing sight of him whose grace is always sufficient for us. We resemble Peter. "Come," said our Saviour: "And when he was come down out of the ship, he walked upon the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried, Lord, save me." Ah, said Jesus, you should have looked not at the waves but at me. Am not I here? Within sight? Within reach? "And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him; and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" How sublime is the exclamation of Doddridge; but it is founded in reason and truth—make it, Christian, whatever threatens, your own—

"If thou my Jesus still art nigh,
Cheerful I live, and cheerful die;
Secure, when mortal comforts flee,
To find ten thousand worlds in thee!"

Lastly, Consider that you are not to endure them *always*. "For there is an end, and thy expectation shall not be cut off." That end is *certain*. Sisera's mother anxiously waited at the window for the arrival of her son, but he never came. The warrior has confidently reckoned upon a victory, which he never obtained; and the mariner has been ready to hail a desired haven, which he never reached. "We looked," said the disappointed Jews, "for light, and behold darkness; for peace, and behold trouble." But, O Christian, there is hope in thy end—a hope that cannot make ashamed. Thy release from sorrow is as sure as the purpose, the promise, the covenant, the oath of God can render it.—That end is *near*. "Yet a little while, and he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry." If your cross be heavy, you have not to carry it far. If life be short, trouble cannot be long. When a few years are come, you will go the way whence you will not return. It may be much less. A few months; a few weeks; a few days more; and all will be peace, all will be quietness, all will be assurance for ever. The sacred writers love to diminish the period. In one place they tell us, "weeping may endure for a *night*, but joy cometh in the morning." In another, that these "light afflictions are but for a *moment*."

In a third, that "for a *small* moment we are forsaken." So, and no more is it in the estimation of faith, and compared with eternity.—That end is *blessed and glorious.* No power of description or thought can do it justice. It will bring a full development of all the trying dispensations through which you have passed. You shall no longer walk by faith, but by sight. You shall see that his work is perfect, and his ways judgment. You shall see how the most adverse providences were essential to your welfare; and not only feeling satisfied, but filled with wonder and gratitude, you will be able to say,

> "Amidst my list of blessings infinite,
> Stands this the foremost, that my heart has bled,
> For *all* I bless thee; *most* for the *severe.*"

What was Canaan to the Jews, after all the bondage of Egypt, and the travels and privations of the desert; what was that land flowing with milk and honey, that rest which the Lord their God gave them, compared with the rest that remains for the people of God—that better, that heavenly country! What a complete, what an eternal discharge! Of all your sufferings, nothing will remain but the remembrance, and this will enhance the deliverance; and "the greater the sorrow, the louder you'll sing." The shadow of care, of sorrow, of fear, shall never flit over those regions of repose and blessedness. "Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended." I could go on repeating Scripture, for it loves to dwell upon this subject; but I will conclude this reference with two passages. The one is, the testimony of the Apostle Paul. He spoke from experience. No one had suffered more; and he had been in the third heaven. But hear him: "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." The other is the address of the angel to John in the Revelation; words which Burns the poet says he could never from a child read without tears—so allied is the tenderness of genius to the sentiments of piety. "He said unto me, what are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said unto me, these are they which came out of great tribulation, and have

washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, or any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

Men and brethren, you have often heard it said, "The end crowns the action." "All is well, that ends well." Now religion has this recommendation. We are far from denying its present advantages; for we know from Scripture and observation and experience, that it is profitable unto all things, and has promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come. But allowing that it were all gloom, and self-denial, and sacrifice, and suffering here; yet "mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace." The happiness in which it terminates, infinitely more than indemnifies and recompenses all the hardships and trials of the passage. Even Balaam confessed this; and prayed, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

What a difference between the Christian and others. Both are advancing towards the close of life: but *they* are leaving their good things, and *he* his evil ones. Both will soon bid eternal farewell: but they to their joys, and he to his sorrows. They at death will plunge into "the blackness of darkness for ever;" while he will reach "the inheritance of the saints in light."

—So reasonable is the Christian's resignation; and so well founded is the Christian's hope, with regard to affliction.

—"But what has such a subject as this to do with me? I am not in trouble." Then I tremble for you. We know of whom David speaks, when he says, "They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men." And we know who has said, "Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God." But if you are not afflicted, you soon may. Every thing here is uncertain. How often is the lamp of the wicked put out. Truth whispers. "Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun: but if a man live many years, and rejoice in them all, yet let him remember the

days of darkness, for they shall be many. All that cometh is vanity." Is it not therefore wise to provide against what is possible, what is probable; yea, I will add, unavoidable? "A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on, and are punished." But are you sure you are not afflicted even now? In the midst of your sufficiency are you not in straits? In all your successes, do you not feel a cold aching void within, still urging you to ask, "Who will show us any good?" While you walk according to the course of the world, do you not complain of the poverty of its pleasures, and the falseness of its resources? Are you not dissatisfied with all creature enjoyments? Is there not a constant war between your inclinations and convictions? Does not conscience often condemn you? Have you not your forebodings of the future? Do you never think of the infirmities of approaching years; of the house appointed for all living; of the judgment-seat of Christ?

Perhaps at this very moment you are not strangers to a wish that you had never been born. Colonel Gardiner tells us, "that while he was keeping up every gay appearance, and was envied as the happiest of mortals, he would gladly have exchanged conditions with a dog." "There is no peace, saith my God, unto the wicked."

—But here are some, here are many before me who are in trouble. For the days are evil; and the cup is going round; and what family, what individual is not called to taste the bitterness, if not to drink the very dregs? I do not ask you what your trials are; but I must inquire, what are you doing under them? Are you despising the chastening of the Lord, or are you fainting now you are rebuked of him?—Unsanctified trouble always produces one of these; it always hardens the sufferer against God, or sinks him into despondency.

Is the former of these your case? Are you one of those, who, when he arrays himself against them, instead of submitting, "rush upon the thick bosses of his buckler;" and "fight against God?" Are you like Ahaz, of whom it is said, "In his affliction he sinned yet more and more against God—This is that Ahaz!" It was an awful appeal that Jeremiah made to God, concerning many of his hearers. Must your preacher prefer the same? "O Lord, are not thine eyes upon the truth? Thou hast stricken them, but

they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return." If this be the case, faithfulness requires me to tell you, that one of these two consequences will be sure to follow. That is,—either God, provoked by your contempt of his correction, will cease to disturb you, and recalling the instruments of his discipline, will say, "They are joined to idols, let them alone." Or he will turn the rod into a scorpion, and fulfil the threatening, "If ye walk contrary to me, I also will walk contrary to you, and punish you seven times for your iniquity." Thus the blow first affects the man's property. Then it strikes a remoter relation. Then it takes away the desire of his eyes. Then it invades his own person, and shakes him by disorder over the pit—and he recovers—and turns again to folly. At length, having been often reproved, and hardening his neck, he is suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy. Are none of you in danger of this? Are there not some of you, who have not only been addressed by him, and frequently addressed; but also have been smitten by him, and awfully too; so that it would have seemed impossible for you to stand out? "I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord. Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." But canst thou stand before him? Can thy heart endure, or thy hand be strong when he shall deal with thee? How much better to be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live! Then will his repentings be kindled together. Then will he say, "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus: Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented: and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh; I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth. Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord."

There is another extreme. Instead of despising, perhaps

you are fainting. You are desponding. You are at your wits' end. You are tempted to curse the day of your birth. Life has lost all its charm—it is a burden too heavy for you to bear. You turn to solitude; but there grief preys upon itself. You think of intoxication; this is drowning misery in madness. You glance at infidelity; but annihilation may be a fiction, and the present only the beginning of sorrows. You resolve on suicide; but you cannot destroy yourself. You take the pistol, and shatter to pieces the tabernacle, and your friends are aghast at the ruins; but the inhabitant has escaped, and the spirit feels itself still in the grasp of God. I am far from insulting your grief. I sympathize with you; and rejoice that I can show unto you a more excellent way. "There is One standing among you whom ye know not." Let me introduce him in all the fulness of his pity and power. He is equally able and willing to relieve you. He is the enemy of sin, but he is the friend of sinners. Cast thy burden upon the Lord: and say, Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me. He will not, he cannot refuse thy application. For he has said, and is now saying, "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." See Manasseh. He was stripped of all, and carried away captive. But his salvation sprang not from his prosperity, but his adversity. "When he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto him: and he was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God." Think of the Prodigal. Plenty had ruined him. The famine, and the husks which the swine did eat, made him think of home—"How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger. I will arise, and go to my father." And that father, while he was yet "a great way off, saw him, and had compassion upon him, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him:" and not only clothed and fed, but adorned and feasted him; and said, "Let us eat and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found." Despair not; but follow these examples, and you will be able to say, with the famous Athenian, "I should have been lost, had I not been lost:" and to sing with many a sufferer before you,

"Father, I bless thy gentle hand;
How kind was thy chastening rod,
That forced my conscience to a stand,
And brought my wandering soul to God.

"Foolish and vain, I went astray
Ere I had felt thy scourges, Lord,
I left my guide, I lost my way;
But now I love and keep thy word."

LECTURE VIII.

THE CHRISTIAN, IN HIS SPIRITUAL SORROWS.

"We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof."—Psalm cxxxvii. 2.

We now pass from the condition of the Christian, to his experience. We have contemplated the changes that may take place in his outward circumstances. We have viewed him in his prosperity and in his adversity; and have seen him carrying his religion along with him through all the varying scenes of human life.

But there are similar variations in "the inward man," "the hidden man of the heart." And these changes are no inconsiderable evidences of the reality of a work of grace, in distinction from religious pretensions. The picture of a tree is invariable; but the tree itself has its seasons. At one time it is leafless, and the sap, though not destroyed, retires into the roots. At another, it revives, and buds, and blossoms, and is filled with fruitfulness. I walk in my garden, and see the stones arranged there, always the same. But it is otherwise with the flowers and plants. And the reason is, because the former are dead, while the latter have in them a principle of life. And such is the difference between the form of godliness, and the power: between a man alive to God, and one that hath a name that he liveth, but is dead.

Let us proceed to the part of the Christian's experience which we are pledged to consider this morning. And here, I can easily imagine, that the subject itself will hardly appear necessary to some. They are rather surprised by the very fact we have assumed as a clear and common verity. Young converts often wonder to hear of the believer's sadness. *They* are often indulged with a peculiar kind and degree of consolation to allure them on, till, whatever difficulties they meet with, they feel themselves too much in-

terested, and too far advanced, to think of retreating. Because, from a regard to their weakness, their enemies are restrained, they seem to conclude that they are destroyed; and because, in the novelty of their views and the liveliness of their feelings, their corruptions are but little noticed, they hope to be vexed with them no more. They therefore wonder to hear older Christians complaining of distraction in duty, and languor of zeal; and weakness of hope, and conflicts with doubts and fears. Thus it was with Israel "in the kindness of their youth." See them on the shore of the Red Sea. They rejoiced in the Lord, and sang his praise, and thought they had only to go forward and possess the pleasant land—ignorant of the wilderness between; and having no forboding of the drought, and the bitter waters, and the fiery serpents, and the Amalekites and Moabites, and their long detensions, and their being led about, and their being turned back—by all of which the souls of the people were much discouraged because of the way.

But if there are some to whom the intimation of these sorrows is surprising, there are others to whom it will be relieving, if not delightful. For there are some who are distressed and perplexed, owing to apprehensions that their experience is *peculiar*. They think none ever had such vain thoughts, such dull frames, such woful depressions, as they often mourn over. Therefore, in their communings with their own hearts, they are led to ask, "If I am his, why am I thus?" and anxiously turning to others, in whom they repose more confidence than they can place in themselves, say,

> "Ye that love the Lord indeed,
> Tell me, is it thus with you?"

Now these will not rejoice in the deficiencies and distresses of others; but it yields them encouragement to learn, that there are some who can sympathize with them; and that what they feel, is not, though grievous, incompatible with a state of grace; since others, and even those who are far superior to themselves, utter the same sighs and groans.

To return. The Psalm from which the words of our text are taken, is universally admired. Indeed nothing can be more exquisitely beautiful. It is written in a strain of sensibility that must touch every soul that is capable of feeling. It is remarkable that Dr. Watts, in his excellent versification, has omitted it. He has indeed some verses upon it

in his Lyrics; and many others have written on the same. We have seen more than ten productions of this kind; the last, and perhaps the best, of which is Lord Byron's. But who is satisfied with any of these attempts?—Thus it begins: "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept when we remembered Zion." These rivers were probably some of the streams branching off from the Euphrates and Tigris. Here it is commonly supposed these captive Jews were placed by their task-masters, to preserve or repair the water-works. But is it improper to conjecture that the Psalmist refers to their being here—not constantly, but occasionally; not by compulsion, but choice? Hither I imagine them retiring to unbend their oppressed minds in solitude. "Come," said one of these pious Jews to another, "come, let us for awhile go forth, from this vanity and vileness. Let us assemble together by ourselves under the refreshing shade of the willows by the water-courses. And let us take our harps with us, and solace ourselves with some of the songs of Zion." But as soon as they arrive, and begin to touch the chords, the notes—(such is the power of association)—awaken the memory of their former privileges and pleasures. And, overwhelmed with grief, they sit down on the grass, and weep when they remember Zion; their dejected looks, averted from each other, seeming to say, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." But what do they with their harps? The voice of mirth is heard no more; and all the daughters of music are brought low. Melody is not in season to a distressed spirit. "Is any afflicted? Let him pray. Is any merry? Let him sing psalms." "As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, and as vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to a heavy heart."—They did not however break them to pieces, or throw them into the stream—but *hanged* them up only. They hoped that what they could not use at present, they might be able to resume at some happier period. To be cast kown is not to be destroyed. Distress is not despondency.

> Beware of desperate steps: the darkest day,
> Live till to-morrow, will have passed away."

"*We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.*"—Let us pass from the Jew to the Christian; and let us survey the Christian,

In his Spiritual Sorrows.

He who would preach well, says Luther, must distinguish well. It is peculiarly necessary to discriminate, when we enter upon the present subject. For all the sorrows of the Christian are not of the same kind or descent.—Let us consider four sources of his moral sadness.

I. Will be PHYSICAL.
II. Will be CRIMINAL.
III. Will be INTELLECTUAL.
IV. Will be PIOUS.

The *first* source is PHYSICAL.

There are some who understand very little of this. They are blessed with a favoured constitution; and can hardly enter into the feelings of those who pass much of their time under the dominion of a gloomy and depressive temperament that leads them to view every thing through an alarming and dismaying medium; and to draw towards themselves all that is awful and distressing. How affecting is it to hear a man of genius and piety complaining, that in one day, in one hour, he who was such an enthusiastical admirer of the works of nature, had presented to him an universal blank; so that nothing after could ever charm him again! We admit that the case of Cowper was extraordinary: but it was so in the degree, rather than in the quality. Others are subject to a measure of the same influence; and while the increased prevalence of this morbid affection produces fixed melancholy, the slighter diffusion of it may be attended with the most trying irritation and depression. We often censure, where, if we knew all, we should only pity. What a conflict have some Christians even in wrestling with flesh and blood! We are fearfully and wonderfully made. We know little of the mechanism of the body; but we know much less of the chemistry. Who can tell how the nervous juices and the animal spirits are secreted? Who can explain how the fluids blend and temper each other? Who knows how it is that when a particular humour predominates unequally, such a change is resistlessly produced in our mass of apprehensions and feelings? Yet we know the fact. We know that external things affect the body. We know that the body

affects the mind. We know that we are the creatures of the season and of the sky. We know that we are not the same in a foggy day, as in a clear one. We know that if there be a suffusion of bile, the world, and the church, and the family, are not governed so well now, as they were yesterday. Nothing is so agreeable in our condition. Our very religion is doubtful; and God is not the same.

Several things result from this reasoning. Is it not astonishing that many Christians will ascribe every animal variation and effect to the agency of Satan! Especially when they know how often, by the aid of a little medicine, all these supposed temptations have been chased away, and every thing restored to its proper hues and attractions again!

It is not necessary for a Christian to be a physician; but it is desirable for him to be able to distinguish between influences purely bodily, and the principles, disposition, and state of his mind. It is difficult to reason with people in this frame, or under this tendency; otherwise we should be amazed at the perplexity and disconsolateness of some excellent characters, and the readiness with which they refuse to be comforted. We have known persons, poor in spirit, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, glorying only in the cross of Christ, and cheerfully going forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach—yet gloomily concluding that they have no part nor lot in the matter, and that their heart is not right in the sight of God. And wherefore do they write these bitter things against themselves? There is no reason why they *should;* but the cause why they *do*, is to be found in something beyond the preacher's province. And till there is a change in the physical economy, all the succours of religion will be urged in vain.

Good men also should learn from hence to be attentive to their health, and keep the body as much as possible the fit medium of the mind. A man may be a good performer, but what can he do with a disordered instrument? The inhabitant may have good eyes, but how can he see accurately through a soiled window! Keep therefore the glass clean, and the organ in tune. We do not wish you to be finical and fanciful, to live in the shop of an apothecary, or have a medical attendant always dangling at your heels. But be soberly and prudently attentive to the body. Rise early. Take proper exercise. Beware of sloth. Observe and avoid

whatever disagrees with your system. Never overburden nature. Be moderate in your table indulgences. Let not appetite bemire and clog the mind. Medical authority will tell you, that where one disorder arises from deficiency, a thousand spring from repletion; and that the board slays far more than the sword.—The

Second source is CRIMINAL.

It will be allowed that they who cannot apostatize may backslide: and we know who hath said, "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways." "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee; and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see, that it is an evil thing and bitter that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God." Observe: it is both *evil* and *bitter;* evil, in its nature, and bitter in its consequences. And these bitter effects take in, not only outward troubles, but inward distresses; the corrosions of fretfulness under a feeling of guilt; the reproaches of conscience awakened from its slumbers, and ashamed of its negligence; the perplexities arising from the doubtfulness of our condition; the loss of peace, and a sense of God's favour. What was said of Israel as a people, will apply here to individual experience. "O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments: then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness like the waves of the sea." You hear much of the hidings of God's face. The expression is perfectly scriptural. "Make thy face," says David, "to shine upon thy servant." His face signifies his favourable regard. This can never be a matter of indifference to the Christian, whether we consider his supreme love to God, or his entire dependance upon him. He must be miserable under the loss of God's smiles. And as Absalom said, "What do I here in Geshur unless I see the King's face?" so says the believer—what do I in the closet, or in the house of God, or at his table, without him? I cannot improve a providence or an ordinance, I cannot enjoy my friends or myself, without my God. So it was with David. "Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled."

But why does he ever hide his face? Is it to display his sovereignty? No; but to testify his disapprobation of our spirit or our conduct. It is of the nature of moral correction. "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it

cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear."

There are some who say—quoting the words of Scripture, but mistaking their design—God sees "no iniquity in Jacob, nor beholds perverseness in Israel." Yet we read of "the provoking of his sons and of his daughters." Yet "the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them." And no importunity could obtain a relaxation of the sentence.—"Sin never hurts a believer!" "He never need be afraid of sin!" And whose inspiration is this language? Where do we learn this doctrine? Did David believe it, after his transgression? Along with the very announcement of his pardon, was he not informed of the sufferings that would still result from his guilt? Did he not continue to confess, "my sin is ever before me?" If not bruised and fractured by his fall, why does he pray, "Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice?" If not filled with a dread of divine abandonment, why does he say, "Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me." If he had not been deprived of the consolation, why does he say, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit?" If he had not been struck dumb, why does he pray, "Open thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth thy praise?" If he had not impaired the cause of God, why does he pray, "Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion, build thou the walls of Jerusalem?"

Upon this principle, the chief hope I entertain with regard to some professors of religion is their uncomfortableness. For it would be a sad symptom in their case, if *they* were tranquil and cheerful, and rejoicing in Christ, *while* they are indifferent to the means of grace, and mind earthly things, and display such a worldly conversation and spirit. For I am sure of this, that if they really belong to God, he will rebuke them, and make them look back, with the exclamation, "O! that it was with me as in months past, when the candle of the Lord shone upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness; while as yet

the Almighty was with me." The way to see and enjoy God is to live near him, and to be always endeavouring to please him. The first Christians "walked in the fear of the Lord, and in the comforts of the Holy Ghost." These are inseparable; and all pretensions to the latter without the former, are nothing but delusion. Let me, therefore, if the consolations of God are small with thee, ask, "Is there any secret thing with thee?" Thy gourd withers: Is there any worm at the root? You are repulsed, and turn your back on your enemies; Is there any accursed thing in the camp? "Let us search and try our ways; and turn again unto the Lord." Let us do more. Let us fall upon our knees and pray for divine examination. "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."—The

Third source is INTELLECTUAL.

For the joy of a Christian is not a vain imagination or a groundless persuasion, endangered by inquiry—it flows from knowledge; and the possessor is able to give a reason of the hope that is in him. Hence it will follow, that though a Christian's safety does not depend upon the extent and the degree of his religious information, his comfort will be very much affected by it. Now there are some who are very defective in their acquaintance with the Gospel; and these, like persons walking in darkness, or at least twilight, are afraid to tread firmly; and are liable to convert harmless objects into spectres of terror. Owing to a want of evangelical instruction from books or teachers, there is in them a prevalence of legality that leads them to look after something in themselves wherein they may glory, or which shall entitle them to pardon and acceptance. Instead of resting in a mediator, between *God* and them, they seek after something mediatorial, between *Christ* and them; and thus not coming to *Him*, as they are, they wait till they shall possess certain qualifications, or perform certain conditions. Thus they labour in the fire and weary themselves for very vanity—for

"If we tarry till we are better,
"We shall never come at all."

They set themselves a mark of attainment; and not being able to reach it, they are cast down. They mistake the degree of their experience for the ground of their hope; and their confidence varies with their frames. And as to their perseverance and final victory, their own vigilance and fidelity usurp their dependence, instead of the everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure. In the Lord they have righteousness and strength. His grace is sufficient for them: and were they to be only and always looking unto Jesus, their joy might be full and constant: but now they often go mourning all the day.

It is therefore of great importance to have the understanding well informed in "the way of salvation," that we "may know the things that are freely given to us of God." For as the Gospel *is* glad tidings; and all its doctrines are *truths* and *facts;* the more distinctly we hear the one, and the more clearly we discern the other, the more effectual will be our relief, and the full assurance of our hope. Peter admonishes Christians to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: and we may consider the latter part of the injunction not only as additional to the former, but as explanatory of its import, and subservient to its performance. The one is necessary to the other. We never shall grow in grace, but as we grow in knowledge, and in the knowledge of the Saviour. We are well aware that there may be speculative knowledge without practical; but there cannot be practical without speculative. Every thing in religion is produced and supported and influenced by just views of things. And this is peculiarly the case with the consolation of the Spirit. Hence it is said, "They that know thy name, will put their trust in thee." Hence, "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance: in thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted." Hence also our Lord said to his disciples, "These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace." And again, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full."

Seek therefore "the riches of the full assurance of understanding." Gain clear and enlarged views of the nature and provisions of the glorious gospel: of the warrant and command we have to believe on the name of the Son of God: of the ground of our acceptance through the sacrifice and

obedience of the surety of the new covenant: of his ability to save to the uttermost: of the efficacy of his blood to cleanse from all sin: of the perfection of his righteousness to justify the ungodly, and give him a title to endless life: of the prevalency of his intercession within the veil; his changeless heart; his constant presence; his infinite fulness of grace: and our being blessed in him with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. Where shall I end? To be led into all this truth, is to be made to lie down in green pastures, and to be fed beside the still waters—to know all this love of Christ which passeth knowledge, is to be filled with all the fulness of God.

Thus far the sorrows which have been spoken of, we have been constrained to pity, or censure, or excuse. They have arisen from constitution, or moral infirmity, or ignorance.—But there are sorrows, which,

Fourthly, Have a PIOUS source.

These are only experienced by those who are called a peculiar people. But *they* are familiar with them; and they feel them on various accounts. Let us view the Christian taking a fourfold prospect. He looks backward—and inward—and forward—and around him: and at each look he weeps.

First. He looks *backward*, and weeps as he reviews the *past*. Some never review life; we mean that they never review it for a religious purpose. They may look back occasionally and frequently to see how they have missed their opportunity for securing some earthly advantage, or how they have been overreached by their fellow creatures, or in order to act a shrewder part in future: but not to become acquainted with their depravity; not to mark how long and how much they lived without God with them in the world.

But grace leads a man to reflect upon his former character and conduct; and to reflect properly. We say properly: for we have heard some professors of religion talk of their former wickedness with no very sorrowful emotions; yea, with a kind of complacency, as if they were relating some remarkable exploits. But how is the Christian affected with the retrospect: "Surely," says God, "I have heard Ephraim *bemoaning* himself thus—Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke—I was *ashamed*, yea, even *confounded*, because I did bear the reproach of my youth." How often did Paul, after

his conversion, think of his previous state; and with what deep humiliation does he acknowledge his guilt. "When the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and I kept the raiment of them that slew him." "I was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious." "I am not worthy to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the church of God." "When," says Baxter, "I reflect on my sins, I find it much easier to believe that God will forgive me, than I can forgive myself."

I enter a Christian's retirement. His eyes have been pouring out tears unto God. I ask him, "Why weepest thou?"—"I have been taking a retrospect of the past. I have been examining my former years morally: and every view I take is humiliating and distressing. Time wasted—means neglected—faculties misimproved—injuries done to others by my advice, or example, or influence; and where in many cases the mischief cannot be repaired!—I passed by the cross; and that which angels desire to look into, was nothing to me.—He wooed and awed, blessed and chastised, and I set at nought all his counsel, and would none of his reproof—I violated a thousand resolutions. I resisted and conquered the most powerful conviction. I trampled under foot the Son of God, and did despite unto the Spirit of grace.—For *these* things I weep—"

Secondly. He looks *within*, and weeps as he examines the *present*. Let it be at once conceded, that grace makes the Christian to differ from his fellow-creatures, and from himself. It delivers him from the spirit of the world, and possesses him with the Spirit which is of God. It calls him out of darkness in his marvellous light. It turns him from idols to serve the living God, and to wait for his Son from heaven. He is a new creature. Old things are passed away; and all things are become new. But though he is really sanctified in every part, he is completely renovated in none. The good work is begun; but a thousand deficiencies urge him to pray, "Perfect that which concerneth me; thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever; forsake not the works of thine own hands."—Ask him now, why he weeps? and you will hear him say—"The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that I cannot do the thing that I would. For what I would that do I not; but what I hate that I do. For to will is present with me; but how to per-

form that which is good I find not. I find then a law, that when I would do good evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death! Instead of advancing, I seem to be stationary—yea, going back in the heavenly life. What ingratitude under benefits! What incorrigibleness under rebukes! What unprofitableness under ordinances! My soul cleaveth unto the dust. What dulness, deadness, distractions, in attending upon the Lord! What little enjoyment in the things of God! The Sabbath returns and leaves me as it finds me. I hear; but it is almost, if not altogether in vain. I pray; but often seem at the throne of grace to forget my errand, and sometimes fall asleep there. I have promises that I cannot believe, and a God I cannot trust. He deserves all the confidence of my heart, and I treat him with the most unworthy suspicions—

> "Sure, were not I most vile and base,
> I could not thus my friend requite:
> And were not he the God of grace,
> He'd frown and spurn me from his sight."

—How mistaken are the people of the world. They often charge the Christian with Antinomianism: they suppose that he embraces doctrines which favour licentiousness: and that he loves sin—when, could they witness him alone, where no one sees him and hears him but God, they would find him bewailing evils which are beneath their notice, and even infirmities which never strike their minds for want of a holy susceptibility. But *his* conscience is so tender, that it resembles the eye which is offended even with a mote. For a Christian feels all the remains of the sin that dwelleth in him. His new principles render it unavoidable. He who longs to advance, groans at every detention and delay; he who pants to excel, is mortified at little deficiencies; he who delights in purity, is offended with the least stain. It may be supposed, that under a perception of his failings, he will be unconcerned, if at the same time he is assured of his safety, and can repose on the certainty and permanency of the Saviour's love. But nothing can be more remote from the truth than this supposition: for it is *then* the Christian feels his imperfections the most painfully. The more he sees

of the excellency and goodness of his Benefactor and Friend, the more he laments that he loves him no more and serves him no better. This is godly sorrow. Thus a good man dying, when observed to weep profusely, said, "I weep not that my sins may be pardoned, but because I know they are pardoned." This accords with the promise: "I will establish my covenant with thee; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord: that thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, *when* I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God."

Thirdly. He looks *forward*, and weeps as he surveys the *future.* Not that he is miserable because God does not admit him into the secrets of his providence, but keeps him ignorant of what a day may bring forth. He knows that all his times are in God's hands, and there he is willing to leave them—

"If light attends the course I run,
'Tis he provides those rays;
And 'tis his hand that veils my sun,
If darkness clouds my days."

But there are moral hazards sufficient to induce him to pass the time of his sojourning here in fear—not the fear of diffidence as to the truth of God's promises, or of uncertainty as to his final salvation; but a fear of moral circumspection and vigilance. Is there not enough to make him tremble as he moves on lest he should enter into temptation? Is there not enough to make him apprehensive, that he has to pass through an enemy's country, and that snares are every where laid for his feet? Does he not know that he carries within him the remains of unmortified passions, so that every thing he meets with from without may draw him aside? That even things harmless in themselves may occasion his falling? That characters far superior to himself have yielded in the hour of danger, and when no danger has been suspected? Is it not painful to think—that by one wrong step, he may lose his evidences of heaven, distress and injure his brethren, and cause the way of truth to be evil spoken of; and induce the adversaries of the Lord to blaspheme? Is it not painful to think—that after all his professions of attachment, he may yet by his sin pierce the dear bosom on which his soul leans, and grieve the Holy Spirit by which he is sealed unto the day of redemption? Is

it not enough to make him sigh, to think that as long as he remains here, he will never appear before One he infinitely loves, without carrying into his presence so much of that which he infinitely hates? Is it not enough to make him groan, being burdened, to think that the leprosy is so inherent and inseparable, that the walls of the house itself must be pulled down and lie under ground for ages, before it can be re-edified, and become an habitation for God through the Spirit?

Fourthly. He looks *around* him, and weeps as he beholds *others.* Fools make a mock at sin; but they that are wise know that it is exceeding sinful, and say, with David, "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law. I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved."

Is he a citizen? He is a patriot. He sighs and cries for all the abominations that are done in the midst of the land. For he knows that righteousness exalteth a nation, and that sin is the reproach of any people.

Is he a minister? O how distressing is it to look down upon those who, after the labour of twenty years, remain the same; yea, who wax worse and worse: to know that he is only preaching them blind and deaf and impenitent: and to think that he is destined to be a swift witness against many that he would gladly save. "Ah," says Paul, "I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame; who mind earthly things." "Ah," says Jeremiah, "give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness. But if ye will not hear, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and mine eyes shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried away captive."

Is he a member of a church? "He is sorrowful for the solemn assembly, and the reproach of it is his burden."

Is he a relation? "How," says he, with Esther, "can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?"—of those living in the same house, sitting at the same table, endeared by all the impressions and attractions of breeding and of birth? Can a wife, without anxiety and anguish, see a husband, otherwise amiable and kind, refusing to hear the word of life, and resolved not to receive the love of the

truth, that he might be saved? Can a parent, with unbroken heart, see a child in the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death? We sympathize with bereaved fathers and mothers. Yet we ought to hail those who have buried early hopes, compared with those whose offspring are living, but erroneous and infidel and wicked. Oh! Rachel, "refrain *thy* voice from weeping, and *thine* eyes from tears; for *thy* work shall be rewarded, and *they* shall come again from the land of the enemy. There is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that thy children shall come again to their own border." "Weep ye not for the dead, neither bemoan him; but weep sore for him that goeth away: for *he* shall return no more, nor see his native country." O ye ungodly! how unreasonable, how unjust are your reflections. You often reproach Christians for their sorrows, when you yourselves in the various relations of life occasion a large number of them. For they see the danger you see not, and weep for you when you weep not for yourselves. Have any of you connexions that are godly? and have you grieved them? Resolve immediately to end this cruel persecution. Retire and pray—"O God of my sister, be my God! God of my parents, be my God!" Let not thy father longer repeat in vain, "My son, if thy heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine." O hasten and ingenuously wipe away the tears of her who has long been saying, "What, my son, and the son of my womb, and the son of my vows?" Yea, let them have joy of thee in the Lord; refresh their bowels in the Lord.

Such are the sorrows which arise from a pious source. These are not only compatible with grace, but spring from gracious principles and dispositions. They are not only found in religious people, but are religious. And we cannot conclude without encouraging, and commending them.

We are aware that this is not the way in which they are commonly treated. The subjects of these spiritual griefs are generally despised, or deplored. Commonly, as soon as persons begin to discover any tendency to these sorrows, they are men wondered at; and they are considered as likely to become melancholy or deranged. But the Prodigal lost his senses when he left his father's house, and came to himself when he resolved to return. And what but a carnal mind that is enmity against God, can lead a man to justify or excuse sorrow in all other instances, and degrade and vilify it here? What is the loss of property to the loss of

the soul? What is the burning of a house, or the loss of a limb, to the casting of both body and soul into hell? What evil can we bewail that deserves a thought, compared with sin—in its guilt, in its pollution, the miseries it entails, the God it dishonours, the Saviour it crucifies? Bunyan remarks, that when he was awakened to consider his condition, nothing amazed him so much as to see how much men were affected with their temporal inconveniences and troubles. "These," says he, "had no power now to interest me. All my concern was absorbed in something infinitely more weighty—what must I do to be saved?" And he is a fool, even judged at the tribunal of reason, who does not feel the same difference, if this book be true.

If, however, such persons escape scorn, they are sure to be pitied. They are regarded as strangers to every thing like enjoyment, and are considered as passing all their lives in mopishness and dread. But they no more deserve our commiseration than our contempt. *They* are to be pitied who have their portion in this life, which we spend as a shadow, and possess nothing to carry away with them into another world a few weeks hence—who can speak every language but the language of Canaan—who are familiar with the stars, those orbs of light, and are plunging into the blackness of darkness for ever—who are caressed by worms, but are an abomination to the Lord—who are placed on a stream, and are gladdened with the flowers of the bank, and charmed with the music on board, and are gliding down into the gulf of perdition—*these* we pity; but not those who are weary and heavy laden—not those who are invited by the Saviour to partake of his rest—not those who are poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven—not those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled—not those that mourn, for they shall be comforted. Though their life may be deemed not only madness, but misery, it *allows* of happiness, and there is a blessedness *arising* from it. We cannot make out this to the comprehension of a natural man. It is a mystery to him, how we "become fools that we may be wise:" how, when we "are weak, we are strong:" how, "though sorrowful, we are yet always rejoicing." Yet so it is. There is pleasure even *in* these sorrows; and there is nothing so painful to a Christian as a hard, unfeeling heart. His weeping moments are his most welcome; and he is never more at home than when looking on him whom he has pierced, and mourning

for him.—This yields him evidence. It is a token for good. It is a proof that he is the subject of that divine agency which takes away the heart of stone, and gives a heart of flesh—that he is the heir of that promise, "they shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them."—Observe the words of the Apostle: "The sorrow of the world worketh death; but godly sorrow worketh repentance unto life, and needeth not to be repented of." Of how many of your griefs are you now ashamed! How unworthy do they now appear of the concern they once gave you! But you will never repent of a tear you shed upon the Bible, or a groan you utter at the foot of the cross.—It allows, it justifies every hope. He is faithful who promised: and what has he said? "To that man will I look, even to him who is poor, of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." "They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy." "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." Yes, the Saviour is appointed "unto them that mourn in *Zion*, to give *them* beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord that he might be glorified." Their comforter is the God of all comfort; and he will soon wipe away all tears from their eyes, and the days of their mourning shall be ended. But, "wo to you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep." As there is a sorrow connected with joy, so there is a joy that forebodes sorrow, issues in sorrow, is no better than sorrow disguised. Such are the pleasures of sin for a season. Such are all worldly enticements and dissipations. *You* boast of these. But one who had a much greater experience of them than you, and was much more honest and ingenuous, makes no scruple to say, that "even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness." *He* said "of laughter, it is mad, and of mirth, what doeth it?" You may profess nothing like this; but while you wear smiles, the vulture is gnawing within. While you celebrate the day of your birth, you wish you had never been born. What have *you* to do with pleasure? "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

Yield no longer to the temptation, which led many in the days of Malachi, to say, "It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that

we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts?" Tell the enemy that he is a liar: that godliness is profitable unto all things, and especially in its griefs. Tell him that this is the high road to safety and satisfaction, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. And take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, "I will go with you, for I have heard that God is with you." "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee, for whither thou goest, I will go, and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me."

"Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times." "Remember me, O Lord, with the favour thou bearest unto thy people: O visit me with thy salvation; that I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance." Amen.

LECTURE IX.

THE CHRISTIAN, IN HIS SPIRITUAL JOYS.

"*Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength.*"—Nehemiah viii. 10.

My Brethren, some tell us, that religion has nothing to do with the passions. If it were necessary to refute such a notion, we could appeal even to the style of the Scriptures. When an author intends only to convince the judgment he expresses himself plainly, and merely reasons. But when he means to affect, as well as to inform; when he wishes to strike, and excite, and to carry along the feelings with the convictions; he is never satisfied with simple representation—his language unavoidably avails itself of circumstances, and qualities, and imagery. And can any one deny that this is the mode perpetually employed by all the sacred writers?

But we observe, also, that such a view of religion is not adapted to our very nature. Our passions are original parts of our being, and designed to be the impulses of action. And the Christian does not destroy, but sanctifies and employs the man. And what passion is there, for which religion does not find a place and an object? Is it anger? "Be ye angry and sin not." Is it hatred? "Abhor that which is evil." Is it fear? "Be not high-minded, but fear." Is it sorrow? "They shall look on him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him." Is it pity? "Have compassion one for another." Is it love? "O love the Lord, all ye his saints." Is it joy? "We joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement."

We are aware that there is a great deal of what may be justly called strange fire offered on the altar of piety. We are not therefore pleading for a zeal without knowledge; but we are not satisfied with a knowledge without zeal. We do not wish for the heat and the ravings of the fever, but for the genial warmth and glowing stimulus that pervade the whole system, when the body is in full health; knowing that what is cold and benumbed and unaffected by application and friction, is nigh unto death, or is palsied already. While therefore we acknowledge that there is such a thing as real enthusiasm, the admission shall not drive us to take up with a religion that consists in nothing but speculative opinions, and lifeless ceremonies, and formal duties. Religion is indeed a practical thing; but it is also experimental. It does include doctrinal truths; but in the Christian, these become principles. They descend from the head into the heart; and there grace reigns through righteousness unto everlasting life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

We have viewed the Christian's sadness; we are now to witness his JOY. We have seen him hanging his harp on the willows; but he now takes it down, and proves that *the joy of the Lord is his strength.*

The words which introduce our subject were spoken on a very memorable occasion. All the people were gathered together as one man into the street that was before the water-gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses which the Lord had commanded to all Israel. And "upon the first day of the seventh month, Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; and when he had opened it, all the people stood up. And Ezra blessed the Lord. And all the people answered, Amen, amen, with lifting up their hands; and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord, with their faces to the ground. So Ezra and his assistants read in the book of the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading." The power of God seems to have been peculiarly present. The whole assembly "wept when they heard the words of the law." "*Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength.*"

When he says, *This day is holy unto our Lord*, he means that it was a sacred festival. When he says, *Go your way*, he means that they should return home, and refresh themselves; for now noon was begun, and they had been standing for hours to hear the reading and expounding of the law. He does not forbid them the delicacies which they had provided for the solemnity, and which were distinguishable from their ordinary meals—*Eat the fat and drink the sweet*—But all this was to be accompanied with two things.

First, *Liberality* towards the indigent and destitute, who would find nothing to regale *them*, when they returned to their humble dwellings. *And send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared.* By the law of Moses, the poor, the fatherless, the widows, and the strangers within the gate, were all to be entertained on these festive occasions; and if they could not provide for themselves, I will not say their betters, but their superiors, were to replenish them. In accordance with the spirit of this statute is the intimation of our Lord to the person who had invited him to his house. "When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the lame, the maimed, the blind: and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just."—The very thing that his professed followers are constantly doing!! The same rule is enjoined in religious fasting as well as feasting. "Is not *this* the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?" Well therefore does the Apostle say, "Let all your works be done with charity." O! what a lovely religion do we profess; and what a church, what a world shall we have, when those who profess it will throw off, with execration, the detestable habits of avarice and selfishness, hoarding and extravagance; and living according to its admonitions, instead of practically insulting them as they now do, will easily and

cheerfully furnish a sufficiency for all the exigencies of sacred and civil beneficence!

Secondly, with *Cheerfulness*. *Neither be ye sorry*—Not that sorrow is improper in itself, or absolutely forbidden: but it was now unseasonable, and every thing is beautiful in its time. Joy becomes a feast. And this joy, says Nehemiah, is as important as it is becoming—*for the joy of the Lord is your strength*—It will strengthen your bodily frame; and what is more, it will renew the strength of your souls, so that you shall mount up with wings as eagles, run and not be weary, and walk and not faint.

Let us contemplate the Christian,

I. In the DIVINITY; and
II. In the UTILITY of his JOY.

I. The DIVINITY of it.

—It is the *joy of the Lord*. So it is called by the Judge of all, in his address at the last day. "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." *Now*, this joy enters the Christian; and as he is so contracted a vessel, he cannot contain much: but *then*, he will enter the joy, and he will find it a boundless ocean. The dawn is nothing compared with the day; yet the one always results in the other: and "the path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." The dawn also arises from the same sun as the day; and this joy is divine, not only in its completion, but in its progress and even commencement—it is *the joy of the Lord*.

The joy of the Lord, means religious joy. But there is always a reason for the language of Scripture; and we lose much, by not remarking the beauty and energy of "the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth." It is the joy of the Lord in every view he can take of it.

—His, in the *authority* that binds it upon us as a *duty*. He has commanded it. He has done this virtually in enjoining many things which necessarily pre-suppose and require it. But he has expressly enjoined the joy itself; and in terms of peculiar extent and degree—"Rejoice evermore." "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice." "Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous; and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart."

—His, in the *assurance* which holds it forth as a *privilege*. His purpose could have taken effect without a promise; but in this case we could not have known his thoughts towards us; nor have walked by faith; nor have lived in hope; nor have pleaded his own engagement in prayer. But now we can go to him and say, "Lord, do as thou hast said. Fulfil the word unto thy servant upon which thou hast caused me to hope." The promises of men are vain and false like themselves, and often make us ashamed of our hope. But the Lord is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent. Hath he said, and shall he not do it? Hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? And has he not said, "The redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs; and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness; and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance; in thy name shall they rejoice all the day, and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted." The assurance is also confirmed by an oath. And, "because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."

—His, in the *resemblance* it bears to his *own*. Christians are "partakers of the divine nature." They are "partakers of his holiness." As far as they are renewed, his views are their views, and his dispositions are their dispositions. When John says, "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the *love of God* in him?"—by the love of God he means obviously a love like God's. As if he should say, God gave his own Son for his enemies; and this wretch will not give a little of his substance for the relief of one, who is bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh. Now the same may be said of this joy. Did the joy of the Prodigal himself surpass that of the father, when he said, "Let us eat and be merry: for this my son was dead and is alive again, was lost and is found?" Do we feel the joy of God's salvation? He feels it too; and this salvation is called "the pleasure of the Lord." If it be more blessed to give than to receive, what must be the pleasure of *him* who "openeth his hand and

satisfieth the desire of every living thing?" But you share in this pleasure, in doing good. Is he "ready to pardon;" and does he "delight in mercy?" You may taste the same delight in the exercise of cordial forgiveness. Doth the "Lord take pleasure in them that fear him, in them that hope in his mercy?" So does the Christian. In them is "all his delight." Does the Lord call his Son his "Elect in whom his soul delighteth?" And "to them that believe he is precious." What a commendation! To have the same end, and the same way with God! To choose what he chooses! To pursue what he pursues! To relish his happiness! To have his joy fulfilled in themselves!

—His, in the *subject*. The material of it, so to speak, is found in him, and in him alone. As the dove returned into the ark because she could find no rest for the sole of her foot, so it is impossible for the mind of man to know any true satisfaction till he says, with David, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." Though, as a fallen creature, he is alienated from the life of God, he retains the same relation to him, as his portion; and having been made capable of communion with God, and designed for it, he is necessarily miserable without it. He may forget his resting-place; but he can find no substitute for it. He may debase himself into a congeniality with the lowest gratifications; but for happiness he must draw near to God as his exceeding joy. With him is the fountain of life. And there is enough in him to bless us, whatever be our wants, or our capacities of enjoyment. And, therefore, says the Christian, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour." In him I have a shelter from every storm; a support under every load. The eternal God is my refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. Am I guilty? "With him there is plenteous redemption." He was angry with me, but his anger is turned away, and he comforteth me. And what comfort can be compared with that which arises from the thought, that I am reconciled unto God by the death of his Son? That I am accepted in the Beloved? Do I want ability to "travel all the length of the celestial road," and a title to heaven when I arrive? "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength." "I will go in the strength of the Lord God; I will make mention of his righteousness, even of his only." All his relations are mine. He is my physician, my friend, my shep-

herd, my father. All his perfections are mine—his wisdom, his power, his mercy, and his truth. All the dispensations of his providence, all the treasures of his word, are mine." All his grace, all his glory, is mine. "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness: as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and a bride adorneth herself with her jewels." Is this exultation excessive? There can be no excess here. As the Lord himself is the source of this joy, the joy passeth all understanding. And the meek shall increase their joy in the Lord for ever and ever, because the subject of it is not only perfect, but infinite.

—His, finally, in the *production*. In vain is provision, however suitable and rich, spread within our view, if it be placed beyond our reach. Observe the language of God with regard to Ephraim: "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love: and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws; and I laid meat unto them." The former was as necessary as the latter: while the mouth of the ox was muzzled, the nearness of the food would only tantalize and distress. What we mean by the allusion is this—There may be reasons for rejoicing when yet no joy is experienced; for the mourner may be unable to lay hold of them, and appropriate them to his own use. Asaph saw his safety, but felt his inability to reach it without the aid of him who had provided it. "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I." David therefore says, "Thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures." And he prays, "Rejoice the soul of thy servant." And he acknowledges, "Thou hast put gladness in my heart." And who can put it there, if *he* does not? Can conscience? Can a Christian friend? Can a minister; even a Barnabas, a son of consolation? "When he maketh peace, then who can make trouble; and when he hideth his face, then who can behold him, whether it be done against a nation or a man only?" Means are to be used; but the agency that renders them effectual is the Lord's. Our sleep would not refresh us without the divine blessing. Our food does not nourish us; but "every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

And if this be true in natural things, is it less so in spiritual? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos? Neither is

he that planteth any thing, nor he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase. He is therefore called the "God of all comfort." And he is so called, not only to forbid our confidence in creatures, but to enlarge our expectations from himself, by bringing an Almighty Creator of succour and refreshment into view, in our difficulties and sorrows. It says, I, even *I*, am he that comforteth you. Is *any* thing too hard for the *Lord?* However dark the scene, if he says, Let there be light, all shall be irradiated. However rough the winds and waves, if he says, Peace, be still, there shall be a great calm. He can turn the shadow of death into the morning. He can plant the hope of glory in the very bosom of despair. What he does not find, he can produce. If there be no pre-existent materials, he can create. *Nothing* hears *his* voice, and yields a world of life and plenty and bliss. He calleth those things which be not, as though they were. He is the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulations.—Let us consider,

II. The UTILITY of this joy.

For it is not only divine, but efficacious; and efficacious, because divine—The joy of the Lord is your *strength*. To know the force of an argument, we apply it. To know the power of an implement, we make trial of it. To ascertain the strength of a man, we compare him with others; we task him with some exertion; we judge by the difficulty of the work which he achieves, and especially by the might of opposition he overcomes. Let us examine this joy. Let us bring it to six tests—some of them very severe ones. And let us see what it can do for the Christian—in his profession of religion—in his concern to recommend it to others—in the discharge of duty—in his perils—in his sufferings—and in death.

First, let us review the Christian in his *profession* of religion. That this profession is required of us, it is hardly necessary to prove. In one place we are commanded to "hold fast our profession." In a second, to "hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering." In a third, we are represented not only as believing with the heart unto righteousness, but as confessing with the mouth unto salvation." In a fourth, our Master tells us, that if we "deny him, he will also deny us;" and that of those who "are ashamed of him and of his words, he will be ashamed when

he comes in the clouds of heaven with the holy angels." So necessary is it not only that we should be what we appear, but appear what we are. The religion of Jesus is so perfectly true and excellent, that it will bear any kind of exhibition. And it demands examination. And it is more beneficial the more it is known.

Now let us see how the joy of the Lord affects this profession.—It is the very strength of it. For in proportion as a man possesses it, he feels satisfied with his portion; he glories in his choice; he is ready to avow it. And if it should occasion him some privations or sacrifices which may lead the enemy to reproach him, "Where is now your God?" he feels more than indemnified already; and can say with the Apostle, "for which cause I suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which is committed to him against that day." David found God's testimonies his delight and his counsellor; and therefore he could say, "I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed."

There is a great difference between godly sorrow and godly joy. When we feel the former, we naturally seek to elude observation; we retire to weep, and the eye pours out tears unto God. But joy is stirring and manifestative. It says to them that are in darkness, "Show yourselves." To the prisoners, "Go forth"—and they "go forth with joy, and are led forth in peace." We can appeal to the experience of many of you. How long did you carry a wounded and bleeding conscience, before you laid open the distress, to any creature-inspection? It was otherwise when the desire was accomplished. When he commanded deliverance for you, when you were made free indeed, you could no longer conceal your emotions. You then said, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul. I cried unto him with my mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue. I will go into thy house with burnt-offerings: I will pay thee my vows, which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble. Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing; thou hast put off my sackcloth and girded me with gladness, to the end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent: O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever." It was the loss of his joy, that made David dumb. He therefore prays,

"Open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free Spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee."—Let us therefore observe the Christian,

Secondly, in his *concern to recommend religion* to others. Real godliness shows itself not only personally, but socially. It must begin at home; but it can never end here. *He* will not value the soul of another who despises his own; but an earnestness for our own salvation involves principles that must make us anxious to save all that are around us. We shall therefore say to them, as Moses said to Hobab, "We are journeying towards a place of which the Lord said, I will give it you; come with us and we will do you good, for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel."

Now of this it is easy to see that the joy of the Lord is the strength. It is this that gives us confidence in our addresses. We speak not from conjecture, or from opinion, but experience. "That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." It is this that gives earnestness to our invitations. We have something suitable and valuable to recommend. We do not ask persons to a barren entertainment. We have a rich abundance; and we have found the plenty after we were perishing ourselves; and knowing that others are still in the same condition, we resemble the lepers at Samaria, who said, "this day is a day of good things, and we hold our peace. If we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will befal us; now therefore come, that we may tell the king's household." He is the man to say to others, "O taste and see that the Lord is good," who has himself tasted that he is gracious, and from his own enjoyment can say, "Blessed is the man that trusteth in him."

This also adds conviction and force to our testimony and commendation. Men see what our religion has done for us, and what it can do for them also. Will any thing recommend a master more than the cheerfulness of his servants? When they constantly sing at their work, is it not a proof that they do not find it an irksome, wearisome thing to serve him? All are looking out for happiness; and if they see that you have found what others in every direction miss; that while others, like fools, are running up and down the

earth, asking, "Who will show us any good?" your heart is set at rest; that while others are full of complaint, you are filled with praise; that while they are enlarging their desires as hell, you learn to be content with such things as you have; troubled, yet not distressed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; having nothing, and yet possessing all things—must not this induce them to say, "This is the seed which the Lord hath blessed?" Will not this move them to take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, we will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you?

Wo to the world because of offences, says the Saviour. And professors should remember, these offences are various and many. The way of truth may be evil spoken of, not only by your immoral conduct, but by your perverse disposition, and by your unlovely temper; and by your sullenness, and mopishness, and gloom, and fear. Your delicate regard for the honour of the gospel should lead you to attend to the command of your Lord, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." But when you are unable to *suppress* sorrowful and desponding feelings, should you not endeavour to *conceal* them? "I was ashamed," say Ezra, "to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way; because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them that seek him." Now confidence in God was not incompatible with his asking for such assistance; but it was likely to operate strangely and injuriously on the mind of this pagan monarch: and because it would look like suspicion and apprehension, he avoided the very appearance of evil.

Thirdly, Let us view the Christian in the *discharge of his duties*. These are numerous, and extensive, and difficult; and he is required to be always abounding in the work of the Lord. And here too, the joy of the Lord is his strength. It is well known that fear chills, despondency unnerves, sorrow depresses. But hope is encouragement. It is energy. It is the main-spring of action. It sets and keeps the world in motion. Joy inspires, excites, elevates. It renders our work our privilege. It throws off the dulness and formality in our holy exercises. We not only have life, but have it more abundantly. The absence of this joy is a kind of winter: and then we are not only dark, but barren: not only cold, but lifeless. But the return of

it makes the spring; and again the earth teems, and the field and garden are all movement, and the trees are blossom, and the air all song. David understood this, and therefore said, "Then will I run in the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt have enlarged my heart." Bunyan knew this, and therefore he releases his Pilgrim from his burden; and so, not only delights him by the relief, but prepares him for the better and more successful execution of his journey. From this load persons are not all discharged at the same time; and some carry it long: but it is an hindrance, as well as a distress; and favoured is he who is early delivered, and can lightsomely advance in the way everlasting.

Some seem afraid to administer the consolations of the glorious gospel fully, as if they would have, if not a licentious, yet a paralizing effect on the receiver. But these timid dispensers of divine truth, though they may be well meaning, are not well informed. They are ignorant of the very principles of our nature; and know very little of the comforts of the Holy Ghost—or they would know that these comforts are not opiates, but cordials—that while they refresh, they also animate. If there must be any thing of an extreme (for which however we do not plead,) the leaning had better to be on the side of privilege than legality, even with regard to practical religion. *Such* a man, grateful for his indulgences, at the feet of his *Benefactor* as well as *Lord*, will feel himself much more disposed and bound to dedicate himself to his service; and *his* language must be, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?"

Fourthly, Let us view the Christian in his *perils*. He is perpetually surrounded with temptations in the world. These flatter him, and would entice him away from God. And these he is to resist, steadfast in the faith. But how is this to be done? By threatening? By constraints? These may indeed induce him actually to refuse the offers and allurements; but not in affection. The joy of the Lord is his strength; and without this, a man will only leave the world as Lot's wife left Sodom—she left it, but her heart was still in the place; and she inwardly sighed, O that I was there! O that I could return, and not be destroyed! Thus there are some who forsake the world, as far as they are impelled by the fear of hell, or the dread of reproach or shame of inconsistency; but they hate the obligation that

keeps them back from their loved indulgences; and, like wasps burnt out of their nests, are angry and resentful towards all around them, for the injuries they have endured. Prohibition, so far from killing desire, has a tendency to increase it; sin takes occasion by the commandment; and that which was ordained to be unto life, proves to be unto death. The Christian is not saved from the world by the law, but by grace. He is not driven out of it against his inclination—he leaves it voluntarily; and gives proof of it: for truly if he were mindful of the country from whence he came out, he would have opportunities to return. He has the same allurements and seductions presented to him, as others. But here is the difference: they are alive to them; but he is dead. He has found something infinitely superior: this, by refining and exalting his taste, has weaned him; and he can no longer relish the mean and ignoble provision of former days. Having found the pure spring, he no longer kneels to the filthy puddle. Having tasted the grapes of Eshcol, he longs no more for the leeks, and garlic, and onions of Egypt. The palace makes him forget the dunghill.

This, this is the way, and the only effectual way of separating the heart from the world; it is to subdue the sense of an inferior good, by the enjoyment of a greater. Who would exchange the green pastures and still waters for barrenness and drought? Who wants lamps, or even stars, when the sun is up?

"As by the light of opening day
The stars are all concealed;
So earthly pleasures fade away
When Jesus is revealed."

This joy exercises a man of carnal affection; and we are persuaded the efficacy of it is far greater to mortify us to the world, than the influence of afflictions. Losses and disappointments may surprise and confound us, and lead us to lament the uncertainty of every thing below; but they do not make us feel their unsatisfactory and polluted nature. Even under the pressure of their trials, and amidst all their complaints, you will often discern the disposition of the sufferers remaining unchanged. And if not, how soon *after* does renewed pursuits succeed deplored deceptions, and they flee to a repetition of similar experiments, till all the

mad career is ended! But the experience produced by the sight of the cross, and communion with God in Christ, will never allow the world to become again the Christian's end, or portion. If by the power of delusion he be drawn astray for a moment, he will soon find that it is not with him as in months past; and he will be sure to feel the wretchedness of what he has chosen, compared with the glory of what he has left. And this feeling will serve to recal him. The apostate has no such experience as this to check and turn him. But the backslider has: and see the result—"I will go," says the Church, "and return to my first husband, for then it was better with me than now."

Fifthly, Let us view the Christian in his *sufferings*, and we shall see that the joy of the Lord is his strength. Here we might lead you back, and call to your remembrance the former times. We might show you the glorious army of martyrs tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. We might show you Peter and John, after being scourged, departing from the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. We might show you the Hebrews, taking joyfully the spoiling of their goods: and men, and women, and youths, severing from their friends who hung on their necks, willing to go to prison and to death. I might show you Bradford, who, when the keeper's wife, weeping, said to him, "O Sir, I am come with heavy tidings—you are to be burnt to-morrow: and they are gone into the city to buy the chain:" taking off his hat and laying it upon the ground, and kneeling and raising his hands, he said, "Lord, I thank thee for this honour. This is what I have been waiting for, and longing for"

Such scenes as these, owing to the laws of the land, we are not called to witness. With us, persecution is not national; is not legal. We can sit under our own vine and fig-tree, none daring to make us afraid. Yet there are instances of private and personal wrongs beyond the prevention of law. The carnal mind is enmity against God, and the tongue can no man tame. We have seen servants deprived of their places: and workmen of their employment; and tradesmen of their custom We have seen wives and children enduring privations, and insults, and outrage. We have seen the follower of the Lamb, bearing his reproach, scorned by his companions, and deserted by his friends—yet acting with decision and consistency, and practically

saying, "None of these things move me; neither count I my *life* dear, so that I but finish my course with joy." And why have they not been overcome? Why have they not partially yielded? They were filled with everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace. "The joy of the Lord was their strength."

But afflictions of any kind may supply the place of persecution, and try every religious principle. We talk of martyrs—what martyrs have endured; what some Christians have been called in private life to suffer, month after month, and year after year—a great part of the heart's bitterness perhaps known only to themselves. Yet, under bodily anguish, and family bereavements, and the cruelty of connexions, and reductions in life the most humiliating, we have witnessed them—not raging against instruments, not cursing the day of their birth, not impeaching the providence of God, not charging him unkindly: but looking upward and meekly saying, "I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me." Not insensible, yet more than resigned—not undervaluing the comforts of which they have been stripped, yet exulting, "Though the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

Finally, It is hardly needful to say, this joy of the Lord is the Christian's strength *in death*. For what but this *can* be his support then? Then lover and friend must fail him. Then the keepers of the house tremble. Then desire fails. What can nature do here? or nature's light? or nature's religion? But in the multitude of his thoughts within him—(and what a multitude of thoughts will beset a dying man!)—God's comforts delight his soul. The world passeth away; but the kingdom of heaven is at hand. The outward man perisheth; but the inward man is renewed. He looks at his trembling limbs, and feels his fainting heart. His heart and his flesh faileth; but God is the strength of his heart and his portion for ever. He looks forward, and sees enough to dismay all mortal courage—but, says he, "my shepherd's with me there." "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

And now what says our subject in a way of practical improvement?

—It says, *Inquire what your joy is.* Is it the joy of the Lord? For there is the joy of the sinner. And we read of the pleasures of sin: these are for a season; and as they are soon over, so they leave nothing but stains and stings behind. We read of the joy of the hypocrite, and are told that it is but for a moment; because at death he must be detected, and may be laid open much sooner. There is the joy of the Pharisee, who trusts in himself that he is righteous, and despises others, and even glories before God. Some are said to rejoice in a thing of nought. Such are all worldlings: for all that cometh is vanity; and honours and riches and power are but to them, as so many toys or flowers thrown into the vehicle, that is conveying the condemned criminal to the place of execution.

Now it matters little which of these joys characterizes you, if you are a stranger to *the* joy of which we have been speaking. But allow me, in reference to your choice, to remind you of the language of Solomon. "Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness. I said of laughter, it is mad, and of mirth, what doth it?" Yes, this is the question, What DOTH it? You have seen what the joy of the Christian can do.—But what doth yours? Does it purify your passions? Does it make you happy alone? Does it afford you any thing like satisfaction? Does it bear you up under the trials of life? Does it raise you above the dread of death and eternity? Has it any constant source? any solid foundation? Is it not the creature of ignorance? Are you not afraid to let in one ray of divine truth upon it? Would not one serious thought of God and of another world strike it dead upon the spot? "I create the fruit of the lips; peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord; and I will heal him. But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked. Therefore thus said the Lord God, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed: behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit."

—It says, *See how greatly religion is libelled.* You

well know that it is commonly represented as at variance with every thing like pleasure; and nothing can be more injurious than such a representation, especially to the young, who are so alive to happiness. But can any thing be so unfounded and false as this vile and repulsive opinion? Surely God is able to make a man happy; and is it therefore reasonable to suppose that he will suffer one who neglects and hates him to be happier than one who loves and serves him? Has my hoping and believing that death is the gate of life, that heaven is my home, that God is my father, that all things are working together for my good, a tendency to prevent or diminish my enjoyment of the beauties of nature, and the bounties of providence, and the intercourses of life? But if the Scriptures are allowed to decide, and they contain the judgment of the only wise and true God, we know that wisdom's ways "are the ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold of her, and happy is every one that retaineth her." And in this testimony every partaker of divine grace acquiesces. It would be in vain to appeal to others. They have not made the trial, but these have. And these will tell you that they know nothing of bondage. They find his service to be perfect freedom. They find that his yoke is easy, and his burden is light. They will tell you that they were strangers to real pleasure as long as they were without Christ; but since their knowledge of him, their common mercies have been sweetened, and their very sorrows blessed; and they prefer their own low estate, to all the glory and goodness of the world.

—It says, *What an inducement is here to seek the Lord and his strength, to seek his face evermore.* Joy is a thing to which none are indifferent. All are contriving or labouring to acquire something in which they may rejoice. But here the blessing is. Here is a joy that deserves the name. A joy soft as the ether of Paradise, and pure as the river of life proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb —the hidden manna—the bread of heaven—angel's food—yea, more—for

> "Never did angels taste above
> "Redeeming grace and dying love."

And can you do without this joy? If you can dispense with it while every thing prospers—what will you do in the day of adversity? If you can dispense with it in the smiles of

youth—what will you do in the decays and privations and depressions of age? If you can dispense with it in the excitements of society—what will you do in the dreariness of solitude? If you can dispense with it in the attractions of life—what will you do in the loneliness of death? If you can dispense with it in a world of engrossment and diversions—

> "O ye gay dreamers of gay dreams,
> "How will you weather an eternal night
> "Where such expedients fail?"

—But do you not *now* feel your need of it? However successful, however indulged, however amused, do you not *now* feel a void within which this alone can fill—a craving which this alone can relieve—a restlessness which this alone can sooth and calm!—And is it not attainable? Is there not One, among all your dissatisfactions and disquietudes, now saying, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls?"

—It says, *Your religion is to be suspected, if you are habitually destitute of joy.* Here we readily exclude all constitutional causes, such as we have admitted in the former Lecture; there is no reasoning from these. We also limit our intimation by observing, that it does not extend to that joy which springs from strong confidence, or the full assurance of hope. With regard to this, every one whose heart is right with God will prize it and desire it. But we have known many who have possessed very little of it through life, and yet have given undeniable proof that they are renewed in the spirit of their mind. But this is only one view of the Christian's joy, or rather one kind of it. There are other, and many other sources of sacred delight. There are the pleasures of Divine knowledge; the pleasures of hope; the pleasures of review, in looking back upon the way by which the Lord has led us; the pleasures arising from attendance on the means of grace; the pleasures arising from congeniality with the things of the Spirit, and which makes it our meat to do the will of our heavenly Father; the pleasures arising from the approbation of conscience; and the pleasures of usefulness. There are persons who are ready to exclude themselves from the gladness of God's nation, and yet their eye sparkles with pleasure

when they see the prosperity of Jerusalem, and hear that the word of the Lord has free course and is glorified.—But are *they* strangers to the joy of the Lord?

—It says, *Let this joy be a peculiar object of attention to every Christian.*—Let him never forget that it is his strength.

If, therefore, he has lost it, let him not rest till he has regained it. Let him hasten back to the place where he slept and dropped his roll. Let him repent and do his first works.

Though his state be secure, let him remember that his comfort may vary and decline; and therefore let him guard against every thing that may wound his peace, and grieve the Holy Spirit, and interrupt his communion with God.

Some of you know the worth of this joy from the want, rather than from the experience. You are not strangers to the nature of it; but the degree in which you possess it, is far below your duty and your privilege. Let me beseech you, as you value your own welfare, and the honour of your God, to seek, immediately and earnestly, an increase of it.

And for this purpose, suffer the word of exhortation. Commune with your own heart, and insist upon a reason for your distress—saying, with David, "Why 'art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted in me?—Maintain intercourse with the wise and experienced. Two are better than one. Jonathan went to David in the wood, and strengthened his hand in God. One Christian is frequently to another like the angel to Hagar—she was ready to die of thirst with water near; but he opened her eyes and showed her the well.—"Retire and read thy Bible, to be gay." Peruse much the Scriptures, which are filled with words good and comfortable. Acquaint yourselves with the method of salvation—the freeness and plenitude of divine grace—the ground of our acceptance—and all the provision made, not only for our safety but consolation.—Pay much attention to the ordinances of God. His ministers are helpers of your joys. He is known in his palaces for a refuge. According to your conduct here, you will be vouchers, both for the promise and the threatening; "Them that honour me, I will honour; and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed."—Be much in prayer. *Ask*, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.—We read of the joy of faith. Look after more of

this all-important principle. You can only be filled with all joy and peace, in believing. But believing, ye shall rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Follow these admonitions; and while the joy of the Lord is your strength, you shall not want the strength of the joy. You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. You shall go on singing in the ways of the Lord; and you soon shall reach His presence, where there is fulness of joy; and his right hand where there are pleasures for evermore. Amen.

LECTURE X.

THE CHRISTIAN, IN DEATH.

"*Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.*"—Psalm xxxvii. 37.

You have heard of the manner in which a distinguished writer, and a Secretary of State, expired. "Come," said Addison, to a young nobleman of rather infidel principles, as he entered his dying chamber; "Come," said he, taking him softly by the hand; "Come, and see how a Christian can die."

This has always been admired as a noble expression of composure, and faith, and zeal. And to this the Poet alludes when he says—

> "He taught us how to live, and, O! too high
> "The price of knowledge, taught us how to die."

If we object to any thing in the address, it is not that it came from a character whose religion some may think too undecided; for candour should lead us to conclude that he was what he professed to be—especially at a period so awful—but that the subject of the eulogy should have been the Author. "Let another praise thee, and not thy own mouth; a stranger, and not thy own lips." The exclamation may indeed have been designed, not to glorify the man, but his religion: and to recommend from his own experience what could support and refresh, even when all other succours and comforts failed. Yet we would rather the friend or the minister had laid hold of the approaching observer, and leading him into the room said, "Come, see how a Christian can die."

Such an office your Lecturer has to perform this morning. "*Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.*"

"Fly ye profane, or else draw near with awe.
For *here* resistless demonstration dwells.
Here tired dissimulation drops her mask,
Here real and apparent are the same.
—You see the man; you see his hold on heaven,
Heaven waits not the last moment; owns its friends
On this side death; and points them out to men—
A lecture silent, but of sovereign use.
Life, take thy chance—but O for such an end."

"*Mark the perfect man, and behold the righteous: for the end of that man is peace.*" We premise three remarks.

The *First*, regards the *character*—The perfect man. This may seem discouraging; but it really is not so. If it intended absolute purity, no creature could claim the title. "Behold, he put no trust in his servants, and his angels he charged with folly." If it intended actual exemption from all moral infirmities, none of the human race, no, not even of the sanctified part of it could be included. "For there is not on earth a just man that liveth and sinneth not." "In many things," says an Apostle, "we offend all." And our Saviour teaches us to pray for daily pardon as well as for daily bread.

To say that the Christian will certainly be complete hereafter, and that he is complete in Christ now, is true. But the character refers to something present and personal. Bishop Lowth, in his admirable prelections on the Hebrew poetry, remarks how commonly it abounds with parallelisms —the second member of the verse never expresses a new idea, but always repeats the sentiment contained in the first. It may enlarge or enforce or explain it; but never gives it up for another. According to this rule, the character is not only called perfect, but *upright*. And the latter attribute is explanatory of the former—the perfect man *is* the upright—one who is upright in his transactions with his own soul—upright in his dealings with his God—upright in his conduct with his fellow-creatures—one "whose rejoicing is this, the testimony of his conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, he has his conversation in the world."

The *Second* regards the *subject of attention.*—The *end* of this man. Every thing pertaining to his character is deserving of notice: his birth, his relations, his conduct, his condition. But here our eyes are fixed on his death.

Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace."

The *Third* regards the *testimony* concerning his end—it is *peace.* This word was not used by the Jews as it is with us. With us it always suggests the idea of reconciliation and concord, after variance and strife; or of serenity of mind as opposed to some kind of conflict. With them the term was significant of good at large: prosperity, welfare, happiness. Thus we are commanded to pray for the "peace of Jerusalem." Thus Joseph says, "God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace." Thus Artaxerxes superscribes his letter, "Peace, and at such a time." Thus the disciples were to say as they entered, "Peace be to this house." Thus we are to understand it, as used by Simeon when he took up the Saviour in his arms, and blessed God and said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace." "My desires and hope are accomplished; I am now happy; satisfied with favour, and filled with the blessing of the Lord"—And this is the meaning in the words before us, "*Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.*" This accords with our design this morning, which is to view the Christian,

In Death.

There are four things in the dying of the Christian I would call upon you to observe—Its Prospect. Its Experience. Its influence. Its Issue.

I. The Prospect is not always pleasing.
II. The actual experience is commonly much indulged and distinguished.
III. It is often peculiarly useful by its influence.
IV. It is always safe and glorious in the issue.

I. It is not always pleasing in its prospect.

There are some indeed who are able to look forward to the scene, not only without reluctance and dread, but with resignation and pleasure. They contemplate death as their deliverance, their victory, their triumph. In all their dissatisfactions and trials they seem to say, "Well; all will be soon explained, rectified, completed. When a few years are come, I shall go the way I shall not return."

Thus Dr. Gouge was accustomed to say, "I have two friends in the world: Christ and death. Christ is my first, but death is my second." Such a Christian may be compared to a child at school. The little pupil is no enemy to his book; but he likes home; and finds his present condition not only a place of tuition, but of comparative confinement and exclusion. He does not run away; but while he studies, he thinks with delight of his return. He welcomes every messenger *to* him—but far more the messenger *for* him. And though he may be a black servant, he says, "Well, he will take me to my father's house."

But such cheerfulness in the prospect is not invariably nor commonly the feeling of good men. When David says, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil," he speaks of this anticipation as an attainment; and intimates that the fear which he was enabled to defy was much connected with the event itself.

Here is a difficulty—not indeed with regard to the unconverted. To them we say, death may well be the king of terrors—and it is. The dread of it prevails more deeply and generally than they are willing to acknowledge. The apprehension of it often makes them superstitious and credulous: and they find a prognostic of their fate in a dream, in the howling of a dog, the croaking of a raven, the ticking of an insect, and a thousand other absurdities. How eager are they to guard against every thing that would accelerate the fatal hour: And how sedulously they strive to keep themselves from every thing that would prove a memento of it! One of the kings of France gave orders that death should never be mentioned in his hearing. Catharine, the Empress of Russia, forbade funeral processions to pass the street near her palace, and required all burials to be performed in the night. Many avoid every reference to their deceased relations and friends, as if in tenderness to their memory; while it really arises from an unwillingness to think of an event to which they are themselves equally exposed. The constant effort of multitudes is to banish the thought from their minds, or to hinder its entrance. The Apostle therefore says, that they are all their lifetime *subject* to bondage, through fear of death. Not always actually in it, but *liable* to it—as reading, or hearing; a coffin, or an opening grave; an accident, or disease—may urge the subject upon their revolting attention. And it is easy to

imagine the wretchedness of such a life: for how hard must it be to keep off from their thoughts a thing that they very much hate and dread; and which daily and hourly occurrences must often obtrude upon them. Yet, as soon as the sentiment is felt, all peace and comfort vanish.

—But the difficulty respects the Christian. Why should *he* be afraid in the prospect? Is not death conquered? and rendered harmless with regard to him? But the serpent may hiss, when it cannot bite. The poisonous fang may be extracted before our eyes, and yet we may feel, at taking the harmless adder into our bosom. There are many Christians whose anxieties and forebodings with regard to death, are only dispelled and destroyed by the event itself. Let us look at the case; and see if we cannot remove a stumbling-block out of the way of God's people. There are several things to be considered—

The fear of death is naturally unavoidable; and must therefore in itself be innocent. The very law of self-preservation necessarily makes every being averse to danger and injury. All the animal creatures have a dread of death. In them, this is merely an impulse, and operates without any distinct apprehension of evil; but in man, this instinctive repulsion has blended with it the result of reasoning, and of local attachment, and social love, and moral responsibility, and reflection, and forecast. Adam and Eve felt this fear in Paradise. To this principle the words were addressed, "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." For this denunciation had been no threatening, had not death been viewed by them as the greatest evil. The Apostles themselves, who had the first fruits of the Spirit, said, "For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." What wonder therefore if ordinary Christians feel the same!

And how much is there to excite apprehension! There is the novelty of the case. For, as Joshua said to the Jews, this is a way they have not gone heretofore. Here their own experience affords them no assistance: nor can they derive advantage from the experience of others. No one has returned to "blab the secret out," and tell them what it is to die. When they think of the leaving for ever of

objects to which they have been long accustomed, the separation from weeping friends, the pains, the groans, the dying strife, the destruction of the body, the consigning of it to the lonely grave, the conversion of it into food for worms, their immediate access into the presence of Purity and Holiness, the judgment that follows after, questionings of their acceptance with God, uncertainties about their future state—is there not enough here to try all their confidence and courage?

There is one thing more to be taken into the account. Others not only endeavour to avoid thinking of the seriousness of the subject, but in some measure they often succeed. By infidelity, and vain reasonings, and dissipations, they may preserve a kind of composure even to the last. Yea, they may amuse themselves even in death itself, as Hume was, joking about Charon and his boat—

"Whistling aloud to keep his courage up."

Yea, they may even bring their principles over to their deluded interest. For though unbelief and diversion do not abate their danger, they affect their apprehension of it, and make them insensible. A man walking upon a precipice is not secure because he is ignorant of his situation; but this ignorance keeps him easy, and laughing, and singing, till he falls off. And thus we are told of the wicked, that they "have no bands in their death; and their strength is firm." But a Christian does not turn away from the subject. He must look at it. He must examine its nature, and bearings, and consequences—and in doing this, he feels much more in the prospect, than numbers of those feel who are ruined by the reality.

Be not therefore ashamed to own your feeling, especially to your fellow Christians and to your minister. Do not conclude that it is an evidence against the reality or degree of your religion. Do not imagine that it disproves, or renders suspicious your attachment to the Saviour. "O! if I loved him I should long to be with him; and then I should love his appearing; and then I should be able to say, Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." But you do love him; and you wish to be with him, by wishing full conformity to his image, and the constant beholding of his glory. But you dread the passage. It is thus with the absentee, when thinking of his return. His estate, and wife, and children

are in America. And his heart is there also. Yet when he looks on the vast Atlantic, he shudders and shrinks back. But *he* does not from hence question *his* love to them, or his desire to be with them.

We acknowledge however that as believers you stand in a very different condition from others: and you ought to endeavour to rise above the fear of death. And there is enough, if you ever realize it, to produce in your minds a noble confidence. And it does not follow, that what you *now* feel, you *will* feel when the season of dissolution arrives.—For,

II. THE DYING OF THE CHRISTIAN IS COMMONLY MUCH INDULGED AND DISTINGUISHED, IN THE ACTUAL EXPERIENCE.

Thus it is said, "The righteous hath hope in his death." The degrees of this hope vary. In some we see this hope contending with fear, and not always able to repel it. In some, it produces a serenity in which the mind is stayed upon God, yet unattended with any higher feeling and pleasure: while some possess and display the full assurance of hope; and have an entrance ministered unto them abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of their Lord and Saviour. Amidst the wreck of nature, *these* are joyful in glory; and shout aloud upon their beds, as if they were already within the veil.

Now we are not going to claim this joy unspeakable and full of glory, or even this perfect peace, or even this supporting confidence, for all Christians in their dying moments. And yet we mean to say, that the highest degree is attainable; and that in general, they are much more favoured, as to religious consolation, in death than in life. Here we will not speak of things beyond our reach. Were we to say—That the chinks and breaks made in the falling tenement of clay, may let in more light than could enter before—that the believer's nearer approach to the world of glory, may bring him more under its influence and impressions—that when he reaches the borders of the river, between him and Immanuel's land, he may glance the hills, and hear something of the harmony, and inhale the fragrance blown across—you would say, perhaps, and say justly, all this is figure. But there is truth in the dying privilege of

the Christian. And four reasons may be mentioned for his superior indulgence at that solemn hour.

First, *He has now more of that single and entire dependence on the Saviour, which is so friendly to our relief and comfort.* A legal bias is natural to us; and during life, a degree of it prevails, of which the Christian is not sufficiently aware himself. He is searching after something, in which, if he does not glory, he insensibly trusts; and feels his hope varying often with his attainments, as if the one was *founded* on the other. But all this is now over. Now he *must* have immediate consolation. But where is he to find it? When he looks back, he cannot derive it from a well-spent life: and when he looks inward, he cannot derive it from a sense of his present worthiness. He sees more clearly than ever that he is an unprofitable servant. In all his doings his sins do appear. And what can he do now? He *must* look to another; and apply to him *as* he is. He therefore cries,

> "A guilty, weak, and worthless worm,
> On thy kind arm I fall;
> Be thou my strength and righteousness,
> My Jesus, and my all."

And a satisfaction is experienced, which was only hindered *before* by unbelief.

Secondly, *He is then urged to come more conclusively to a judgment concerning his state.* He must, indeed, have often examined himself before; but he never felt so pressing an excitement as he now does. He can *comparatively* neglect it no longer. He now *must* know how matters stand between him and God, for they will soon be found unalterable. And if his condition was an unsound one, the exploring of it would be the way to alarm him, and not to tranquillize. But his state *is* good; and ignorance is the only cause of his suspicion and disquietude. Let this be removed, therefore, and let him see things as they truly are, and his trembling hope is confirmed. *His* fear before was needless, for the house was safe, and able to abide the storm. But now having been driven to inspect the foundation, he knows its security and permanence, and can rejoice because he *sees* that it is founded on a rock.

Thirdly, *He then needs peculiar support and consolation; and the Lord deals with his people according to the principles of the truest friendship.* He is with them most, when

they most require his presence. "I will be with him in trouble." He is always with him, for he hath said, "I will *never* leave thee, nor forsake thee." But the meaning is, that he will be with them then pre-eminently. And where is the believer who, in passing through life, has not had more of his manifestations and influences and comforts, in his sufferings, than in any other circumstances? But what an hour is here!—when he gathers up his feet into the bed, and turns his face to the wall; and Satan for the last onset comes down, having great wrath, knowing that his time is short! But the Lord he has trusted and served will draw near at his breathing, at his cry. He will whisper into his very soul, "Fear not, For I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." And what is the result? "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth I desire beside thee. My heart and my flesh faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

Lastly, *He can then safely received those discoveries an communications which would have made undue impressions before.* For every thing there is a season; and the believer must be prepared for his work, as well as his reward; and for his duty in the way, as well as for his blessedness at the end. Our present conditions and stations are appointed us by the Lord; and while we are in them, their claims must not be despised or neglected. But if we are to regard our natural connexions, and our civil and secular concerns, and the preservation of our health and life, we must be attached to them, and feel a degree of interest in them. Yet there are measures of knowledge and comfort, which would so powerfully affect us, as to draw us away from earth, and make every thing seen and temporal *feel* too low and little to engage us. We see this in Peter. When our Saviour was transfigured, and Moses and Elias appeared with him in glory, Peter was so charmed, that he proposed building tabernacles, to reside there. But, says the Holy Ghost, he knew not what he said. For, to take but one view of the proposal, had it been complied with, what would have become of his house and wife and children? O! Peter, in his ecstasy, had forgotten these. These however must not be forgotten while we contiuue in our relations to them, and can fulfil their demands. But when we

must leave the scene, it is wise and kind to allow us to be dead to it. When we are going, it is well to be loosened from our detentions. When life is ending, and the love of it can no longer be useful, it is a privilege to have our love to it vanquished by something better than life; and to be blinded to every thing we are resigning around us, by a sight of the glory that is to be revealed; and to be rendered deaf to every sound but the voice that cries, "Come up hither."

After all, we may not have perfectly accounted for the higher experience of the Christian in death. But the fact is undeniable. It has been verified in numberless instances. How often have we witnessed it ourselves. How often have we found Christians the reverse of all their previous apprehensions. We have attended them when they have displayed a dignity of sentiment, and expressed themselves with a force of language, to which they had been strangers before. The timorous have become heroical. They whose minds were contracted by ignorance, have burst into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. The illiterate and the vulgar have shown an elevation and refinement of taste, philosophers never knew—and servants and rustics have sung,

> "O glorious hour, O blest abode,
> I shall be near, and like my God;
> And flesh and sin no more control
> The sacred pleasure of my soul."

Fear not, therefore, O ye seed of Jacob. Encourage yourselves in the Lord your God; while you say, I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait; and in his word do I hope. Do not perplex yourselves about a futurity which God has foreseen and provided for. "Take no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself; sufficient for the day is the evil thereof"—and the good. Your duty has only to do with the present; and the grace you are to seek is grace to help in time of need; active grace for the hour of exertion; and passive grace for the hour of suffering; grace for life in life, and dying grace for a dying hour. The Jews were not to live on a hoard. If in their anxious distrustfulness they laid up manna for the ensuing day, instead of affording them a wholesome resource, it bred worms: they therefore gathered it fresh every morning, and it failed them not till they

could eat of the old corn of the land. Take another allusion. If you were travelling, and before you could reach your destination you had a trying river to pass, would it not be enough to relieve you to know, that *when* you came to the brink there would be a boat ready to convey you over? Must it be brought to you now in your journey? Though necessary for the water, would it not rather encumber you on land? Yet so it is; you are not satisfied unless you can take the vehicle along with you. You must *see:* but you are not to see—"We walk by faith, and not by sight."

III. The DYING OF THE CHRISTIAN IS OFTEN PECULIARLY USEFUL BY ITS INFLUENCE.

When our Saviour was foretelling the destiny of Peter, he said, "When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God." He was to die by violence and crucifixion. Ecclesiastical history informs us of numbers who were converted to the faith, by the death of those who suffered for the Gospel. The scene naturally tended to raise their curiosity, and fix their attention: and, witnessing the firmness of their conviction, and the dignity of their support; and seeing their gentleness and patience; and hearing their prayers for their persecutors and murderers—they became companions of them that were so used.—And this led to the remark, that the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the churches.

All are not called to die for the truth's sake; but the effect ascribed to Peter's death will apply to the death of every Christian. Not only is it important to himself, but the glory of God is concerned in it.

"His God sustains him in his final hour,
"His final hour brings glory to his God."

The useful death, however, is not that only which abounds with ecstasy and rapture; but also that in which an inferior degree of confidence is blended with patience under suffering, submission to the will of God, humbleness of mind, penitence at the foot of the Cross, a concern to recommend

the Saviour's service and to promote his cause.—This, if it does not excite so much wonder and discourse, is more exemplary. A death too strikes us, where we see a victory over the world; when the individual is willing to depart, though not pressed by the infirmities and pains of age, but in the midst of life; and leaving not a scene of penury and wretchedness behind, but every present attraction and agreeable prospect. We also prize a death preceded by a holy and consistent life. Some religionists are fond of the marvellous and the sudden; and our obituaries are too often filled with the triumphant departures of those who began to pray a few days before. This is often peculiarly the case with malefactors. Few of these, if attended by certain orders of men, but in a few hours are quickly ripened for a confident and joyful death. We do not wish to limit the Holy One of Israel in the freeness of his mercy and grace. But wiser people hesitate about these prodigies. They wish for more certainty, more evidence than can be satisfactorily obtained in cases, where the impressions of the condition can scarcely be distinguished from the operation of the principle: and therefore, while they may sometimes indulge a hope, they will rarely be disposed to proclaim it,—"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his *saints. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of* that *man is peace.*"

Yes, it is peculiarly worthy attention. How often has the death of the saint proved the life of the sinner; and also helped those much who have believed through grace. A dying minister's end has exemplified, and confirmed, and enforced his doctrine; and he has effected in the sick chamber what he failed to accomplish in the church. A dying father, disregarded before, has been heard to purpose, when he has summoned his children to his bed, and solemnly addressed them, as Bolton did his family: "See that none of you meet me in an unconverted state at the day of judgment." Or as David admonished Solomon: "I go the way of the world. And thou, Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever."—What ingeniousness has ever resisted a dying mother—heaven in her countenance—her tearful eye—the grasp of her soft

hand—her last trembling embrace—her expiring accents—"What my son, and the son of my womb, and the son of my vows—are we here to part for ever?" The husband who refused to hear the word, though urged by beauty, and affection, and tears; when the desire of his eyes is removed, is now won by the last instances of her lovely conversation made sacred by death? and, while he rears the monument to her memory, resolves to trace her steps, once—(how painful now the thought)—taken alone!

—How affecting and interesting does grace render the dying of the Christian, not only to his relations and friends, but to all who see or hear it. Not only is the attention then excited, but every thing is adapted to aid impression. Persons are now regarded with peculiar earnestness. They are supposed to be free from the influence of the world. They are regarded as sincere, and entitled to credit. All now is final, it is the last time they can be seen or heard. What a lecture is the event itself! It cries, See, every thing is vanity, the world is passing away. But here is a man that has hold of a better and an enduring substance, and displays a greatness that defies the ravages of death. The outward man perishes, but the inward man is renewed. He is bound, yet free. He is dying and behold he lives—and not only has life, but has it more abundantly. The way of transgressors is hard, and they say nothing in praise of those things of which they are now ashamed. The people of the world never speak well of it at parting. But here is a man commending the ways of holiness, and bearing testimony to the excellencies and goodness of the Master he has served—"Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O Lord. O taste, and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in him." "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

O! such a dying chamber is none other than the house of God, and the gate of heaven. There "is brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." There angels hear the acclamation, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law." Here, weaned from the world, and loosened from life, we have said, "Let us go away, that we may die with him." Here a

glory has been shed, an influence has been felt, that has impressed the careless, fixed the wavering, emboldened the timid, convinced the ignorant. It has strengthened the saint to live. It has taught the pastor to preach. It has led the infidel to retire and pray, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!"

Upon the principle of this part of our subject, we may make a remark concerning a slow or a sudden death. Unquestionably a sudden death is desirable, with regard to exemption and privilege. For what an indulgence must it be, to be spared all the forerunners and attendants of dissolution; and in the twinkling of an eye to pass from earth and to be with God! But it is less preferable on the score of usefulness. We derive nothing from the dying experience and language of such. A Christian is not to choose for himself; and if a lingering death will subserve more the honour of God and the benefit of man, there is enough to induce him to say, "Not my will, but thine be done." Heaven will make amends for all—yea, the usefulness itself is the sufferer's reward.

And, Christians, let me from hence admonish you to be concerned to serve religion, not only by the life you live, but by the death you die. The Saviour's empire and claims extend to both. "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's." "By faith, Jacob, when he was dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff." Dr. Rivet said, "Let those who come to inquire, see me; I ought to be an example in death as well as in life." Sampson, when about to die, prayed that God would strengthen him "this once." This is the last time you can do any thing in the world—it is the last arrow you have in your quiver, says an old writer, and you should take a good aim with this. Cato is made in the tragedy to complain, that he could die but once for his country. You can die but once for your family, the church, and the world. O let it adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things.

IV. The DYING OF THE CHRISTIAN IS ALWAYS SAFE AND GLORIOUS IN THE ISSUE.

We *must* take this into the account in doing justice to his end. For there are instances in which the Christian may not be able to express, or enjoy pleasure or hope in death. There are two cases of this kind.

The first is, the case of Divine Rebuke for Moral Delinquency. For God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, has said, "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless, my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail." This however is not wrath, but anger. Anger is consistent with love, and springs from it. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." And he sometimes rebukes and chastens, at the last. He hides his face, and they are troubled; and perhaps even their sun goes down under a cloud. But he retains not his anger for ever. Though they are chastened of the Lord, they are not condemned with the world; and though here he humbles them under his mighty hand, he exalts them, in due time, for ever.

The other is the case of Constitutional Malady. In this condition our heavenly Bard died; and we have known others who have died under a physical depression, with which religious encouragements have contended in vain. But though their end was not peace in the exit, it was peace in the issue. Their despondency did not affect their right to the tree of life. They condemned themselves; but God delighted in them.

And what an exchange, what a surprise did such sufferers experience! They departed, expecting to awake in torment, and found themselves in Abraham's bosom! They left the world in a momentary gloom, and entered into everlasting sunshine!

For observe, I beseech you, the difference between the delusion of the Infidel, and the mistake of the Christian. "I give," says Hobbs, "I give my body to the dust, and my soul to the Great Perhaps." "I am going to take," says he, "a leap in the dark." And such a man not only takes a leap *in* the dark, but *into* the dark. And from the

darkness of ignorance, and doubt, and uncertainty, he plunges into the blackness of darkness for ever. But it is infinitely different with the Christian. He may take this last step in the dark, but he steps into day: perfect and endless day: where it will be said to him, "Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw herself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended."

Thus, however he may expire, the result is blessed; and the day of *his* death is better than the day of his birth. It is the day, when, as a weary traveller, he arrives at home: when, as a sea-tossed mariner, he enters his desired haven: when, as a long-enduring patient, he throws off the last feelings of his lingering complaint; when, as an heir of immortality, he comes of age, and obtains the inheritance of the saints in light.—Thus, whatever may be the manner of his death, for *him* "to die is gain." And what gain? Can the tongue of men or of angels express what the Christian by dying gains—In exemption? In residence? In fellowship? In knowledge? In holiness? In pleasure? For when he closes his eye on the sorrows of life, he "shall not see evil any more." When he leaves this polluted earth, he has a better, even a heavenly country. When the earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, he has a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. When he leaves the wicked world, and the defective church, he joins the spirits of just men made perfect, and the innumerable company of angels. Now he sees through a glass darkly, then face to face. Now, when he would do good, evil is present with him. Now, the consolations of God are often small with him. Then he will be presented faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. For when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. But it doth not yet appear what we shall be.

"In vain my feeble fancy paints
The moment after death;
The glory that surrounds the saints,
When yieding up their breath.

One gentle sigh their fetters breaks;
We scarce can say, 'They're gone!'
Before the willing spirit takes
Her mansion near the throne.

Faith strives, but all its efforts fail
To trace her in her flight:
No eye can pierce within the veil
Which hides that world of light.

Thus much (and this is all) we know,
They are completely blest;
Have done with sin, and care, and wo,
And with their SAVIOUR rest."

And is it for *such*, we put on sable attire, and go mourning all the day? Is this thy kindness to thy friend? If you loved them, would you not rejoice because they are gone to the Father? Are they not now, from the most excellent glory, ready to exclaim, "Weep not for us, but for yourselves and children—You are the proper objects of pity, not we. You who are still in the conflict, not we who have gotten the victory. You who are yet in the body, not we who are delivered from the burden of the flesh. You who rise in the morning to cares that perplex you, fears that dismay you, disappointments that vex you, infirmities that depress you;—not we, who are for ever with the Lord."

Ah! my Brethren, if all this be true, what reason have we to adore the undeserved and infinite goodness of God. We cannot think too highly of this attribute; and it is well for our consciences that the proofs of it are so numerous and obvious. The earth is full of his riches. In the various seasons, he crowns the year with his goodness. He daily loadeth us with his benefits. He gives us all things richly to enjoy. But what would all these have been, with destruction at the end? Who remembered us in our low estate? Who turned the curse into a blessing? Who converted the avenue to hell into the gate of life? Who caused the spoiler to enrich us? and made the last enemy an inestimable friend?

Let us not also forget the way in which this change is accomplished; the mediation of the Lord Jesus. Here is the mystery. We who were poor could never have been rich, if he who was rich had not for our sake become poor. Because the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he likewise himself took part of the same. He bore our sins in his own body on the tree; and died that we may live. He abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel. He therefore says, "If a man

keep *my* sayings, he shall not see *death*." He has indeed to pass through the state; but the bitterness of death is past. *He* has only to finish his course with joy, to fall asleep in Jesus, to depart to be with Christ, which is far better.

But, my dear hearers, will this be the case with us? Let us not think the inquiry needless, or incapable of solution. Here people often show their ignorance and presumption. They talk of the desirableness of death; but expose themselves to the censure of the prophet, "Wo unto you that desire the day of the Lord! to what end is it for you? the day of the Lord is darkness, and not light. As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him. Shall not the day of the Lord be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness?" When some of you wish you were dead, what is it in reality, but wishing you were damned? You are just as near to hell as you are to death; and the one is as sure as the other. Be not therefore deceived. Whatever privations or sufferings you are now enduring, it is not better for *you* to die than to live. Much as you complain, these are only the beginning of sorrows, the earnests and foretastes of everlasting lamentations and mourning and wo. What says the voice from heaven? "Write, blessed are the dead that die in the Lord." These are all blessed; but these only. As for those who are not in Him, they are not under grace, but under the law. And, "as many as are under the law are under the curse." His righteousness is not theirs to justify them. His Spirit is not theirs to sanctify them. They have no title to glory. No meetness for it. No capacity for its services. No susceptibility of its joys.

Finally. Let us now turn the medal. We have been speaking of the death of the Christian—but mark the wicked man, and behold the ungodly—What is his end? The answer would seem too awful for declamation; and we should not even present the scene, but to heighten the subject by contrast; and to prevent, if possible, your realizing it in your own experience. We therefore endeavour to save with fear; and knowing the terror of the Lord, would persuade men. And in this work of apparent severity, but real compassion, the sacred writers go before us. "What," says Peter, "shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God?" "The Lord," says David, "shall laugh

at him, for he seeth that his day is coming. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be; yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. I was perplexed and pained at the sight of their prosperity, until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places; thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image."

Does the dying sinner look back upon the past? "Vanity of vanities," says the reviewer, "vanity of vanities, all is vanity." His life appears a succession of fancies, dreams and impositions. Nothing seems real, but his sins. These—his neglect of prayer, his forgetfulness of God, the profanation of his Sabbaths, the contempt of his word and commandments—these, in their number and aggravations, revive and approach—and conscience keeps them in view.

—What satisfaction or relief can the present afford him? Every thing in his outward condition may be agreeable; but what is this to a wounded spirit? Righteousness delivers from death, but riches profit not in the day of wrath. What is honour to one who knows he is ready for the worms? Can flattery sooth the dull, cold ear of death? What is the consolation of being praised where we are not, while we are miserable where we are!

What does the future promise? He is separating from every thing he loves, to enter a state in which he has no hope, after which he has no desire, and from which he has no escape—a state of thought without the possibility of diversion; of passion without the means of gratification; of society without friendship; of enmity without restraint; of accountableness without excuse; of retribution without mercy; of loss without recovery; and of misery without end? Who knoweth the power of thine anger? Even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath. In many cases fear magnifies; and when the evil comes, the reality falls far short of the apprehension. But here the event infinitely exceeds the foreboding. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. No wonder therefore, the death of the sinner is represented in the Scripture as the effect of compulsion—"The wicked is driven away in his wickedness." "He shall be driven from light into darkness, and chased out of this world."

Some of these scenes are kept secret—perhaps they are misunderstood. They are ascribed to a distempered imagination. The terrified victim is supposed to be in the phrensy of delirium. Some, by the composing draught are stupified, who would otherwise drive and keep every attendant from the room. Yet the reluctance, and anguish, and horror, are sometimes known; and make an awful impression for the time. But suppose there is nothing of this; and the sinner dies, as it is often expressed, like a lamb; the delusion is but for a moment. He instantly sees his mistake. But the immutability of his state renders the knowledge as dreadful as it is unavoidable. His disappointment is an unspeakable aggravation of his misery; and the consequences are remediless.

O! that you were wise, that you understood this, that you would consider your latter end! Then surely you would not give sleep to your eyes, or slumber to your eyelids, till you had a good hope through grace, that you were delivered from such a doom.

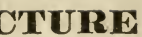
—But you think the end is not near; and distant things do not impress. You put far away the evil day. But can you put it *entirely* away? Yea, can you really put it *far* away? How long do you think of living? Fix the period. Place it at three score years and ten, place it at four score years, it is soon cut off, and you flee away—whither? What will become of you *then?*

But how uncertain is your reaching this period! At what age, in what place, in what condition, in what employment, have not men died? On what are you relying to escape a death which has unexpectedly and prematurely carried so many of your connexions and neighbours down to the dust? On youth? On strength? What is your life? "It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." "Every man at his best state is altogether vanity." O! thou, in whose hands our breath is, and whose are all our ways, so teach us to number our days, that we may apply our heart unto wisdom.

And, my Brethren, what is this wisdom? What is the one proper and rational part which creatures, circumstanced as we are, have to act? Is it not to prefer the soul to the body, and eternity to time? Is it not to agree with our adversary while we are in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver us to the judge, and the judge deliver us to the officer, and we be cast into prison? Is it not to

flee for refuge to the hope set before us? Is it not to make the concern of Paul supremely and immediately our own? "That I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings being made conformable unto his death."

LECTURE XI.



THE CHRISTIAN, IN THE GRAVE.

"*If I wait the grave is mine house.*"—Job xvii. 13.

This was in answer to the opinion and advice of his friends. They had repeatedly intimated, that if he repented, and reformed, and prayed to God, he might surely reckon upon a speedy restoration to health, and a peaceful abode, and a prosperous condition. "If thou wouldest seek unto God betimes, and make thy supplications to the Almighty; if thou wert pure and upright? surely now he would awake for thee, and make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous. Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase." "If thou prepare thine heart, and stretch out thine hands toward him; if iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles. For then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot; yea, thou shalt be steadfast, and shalt not fear; because thou shalt forget thy misery, and remember it as waters that pass away: and thine age shall be clearer than the noon-day; thou shalt shine forth, thou shalt be as the morning. And thou shalt be secure, because there is hope: yea, thou shalt dig about thee, and thou shalt take thy rest in safety. Also thou shalt lie down, and none shall make thee afraid; yea, many shall make suit unto thee."

Now, says Job, if I were to do this, and wait for the accomplishment of your promises, I should be disappointed. Not that it would be in vain for me to serve God; but he would not appear for me in the way of which you speak. He will not deliver me from my present afflictions in this world; or recover me from the disorder under which I am ready to expire—No. The case is mortal and desperate—"*If I wait, the grave is mine house.*"

This leads us to make two remarks. The first connects itself with a passage which he presently uttered, and which has given rise to much dispute. I refer to his noble confession. There are some who contend, that he means only to express his hope of a temporal redemption, or the revival of his former greatness. But, in answer to this poor and low interpretation, not to observe the solemnity of the introduction, and the grandeur of the sentiment and diction, it is plain, not from a few, but many declarations, that Job entertained no expectation of being restored in this life. "The eye that seeth me, shall see me no more. For now shall I sleep in the dust, and thou shalt seek me in the morning, and I shalt not be. My breath is corrupt, my days are extinct, the graves are ready for me. My days are past, my purposes are broken off, even the thoughts of my heart. And where is now my hope? as for my hope, who shall see it?" "*If I wait, the grave is mine house.*" He must therefore have a reference to the most glorious of all events when he says, "O that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book! that they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever! For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reigns be consumed within me."

The second remark is, that when Job said, "*If I wait, the grave is mine house,*" he was mistaken. Instead of a speedy dissolution, which he obviously looked for, "the Lord turned his captivity, and gave him twice as much as he had before. And after this, Job lived an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, even four generations." How often, in the risings of his grace and of his providence, does he not only deliver, but surprise his people. The day seemed setting in with clouds and darkness, but at evening time it was light. "We would not, brethren," says Paul, "have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: but we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us."

David, also, was soon able to refute his own unbelieving conclusion—"I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless, thou heardest the voice of my supplication when I cried unto thee." And is there a Christian here, but can acknowledge, to his praise, that he has been better to him than his fears; and done for him exceeding abundantly, above all he was once able to ask or think?

—Yet Job's recovery, with regard to life, was not a *cure*. He was only *reprieved*. The sentence was left suspended over him still—"Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." And *thus* the words were true in his case—"*If I wait, the grave is mine house:*" and his house it was. And thus, my dear hearers, the words furnish a motto for each of you. Whatever be the object of your hope, here is your destination. You may wish, and you may wait; but here is the end of all your solicitudes. Whatever is your present abode, here is your last. You may now occupy a strait and mean tenement, or a large and splendid mansion: but you will neither be incommoded with the one, or delighted with the other, long—Here is the residence to which you are all hastening—hastening even while I speak —*The grave is mine house.* Let two things engage our attention.—Let us,

I. Consider what is awful and repulsive in the grave.—And,

II. What the Christian can find to relieve it.

I. Consider what is awful and repulsive in the grave.

> ....."The grave, dread thing;
> Men shiver when thou'rt named. Nature appalled
> Shakes off her wonted firmness. Ah! how dark
> Thy long-extended realms, and rueful wastes,
> Where nought but silence reigns, and night, dark night."

—This is fine, but Job excels it. "Before I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness and the shadow of death. A land of darkness, as darkness itself; and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness." What a solemn grandeur pervades this representation! What an evidence does it furnish of Burke's observation, that obscurity is a source of the true sublime; and that, even in poetry, a powerful impres-

sion may be made, where no distinct imagery is presented. Let us take three views of the grave; they are all awful and affecting.

First, We may regard it as *a monument of human guilt.* What error can be named, that is not connected with diminishing apprehensions of sin? Hence we must seize every opportunity of producing the needful conviction, that it is an evil and bitter thing; evil with regard to God, and bitter with regard to ourselves. Men think lightly of it, but it is more poisonous than the gall of asps. They cannot be induced to hate it, and fear it: and yet they may constantly and easily see its hateful and fearful effects. If they will not believe in the hell that it has prepared for the devil and his angels in another world; they cannot deny the desolations it has produced among the children of men in this. Once all that moved upon the earth was buried in the deluge—Could you have witnessed the spectacle without horror? But the same sin which then destroyed all the human race at once, acts no less fatally now in killing them all successively and individually. The time is nothing, the execution is the same. Earthquakes, and wars, and pestilence, and famine, are of more rare occurrence, and few comparatively can view the effects: but you can all trace the ravages of disease; you can all see men going to their long home, and the mourners going about the streets. Repair to some Golgotha. Enter a church-yard. Throw your eye over the inscribed stones, and the turfed hillocks; think of the undistinguished mass on which you tread—and then ask the question, which Jehu asked when he saw the remains of the sons of Ahab, "Who slew all these?" Why every burying-ground, according to its size, is a jail with so many cells, some holding one, and some more prisoners: and they who are lodged there are not confined in consequence of a debt due to nature, but to the justice of God. There *is* no grave in heaven; there *was* no grave in paradise; and there would have been none in all the earth, but for sin. Man was indeed originally capable of dying, as his experience soon evinced; yet no accident without, and no malady within, would have endangered his being, or diminished his vigour, but for sin. While innocent, he was immortal—not from the inherency of any immutable properties of nature, but from the divine appointment and preservation, of which the tree of life in the midst of the garden was either the means or the pledge.

"The wages of sin is death." "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death came on all, because all have sinned."

Secondly, We may view it as a *state of extreme degradation.* Whatever we are invested with, we must be despoiled of all at the gate of the grave. Even the costly and tempting attire that ministered so much to the vanity of the wearer, and the danger of the beholder, is here stripped off; and if any substitute be allowed, it is the shroud and the windingsheet—though thousands are denied even these. "We brought nothing with us into the world, and it is certain we shall carry nothing out." "As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand." "For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him."

What is any condition without society? But the grave forbids all intercourse, all interview. Says Hezekiah, with tears, "I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world."

Here the man boasts of his relations. There he says to corruption, thou art my father, and to the worm, thou art my mother and my sister.

There all his active functions, and the feelings which they engendered or subserved, have ceased. "The living know that they shall die; but the dead know not any thing. Also their love and hatred and envy is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun." His business, his profession, descends to his successor, or passes to his rival. Even his religious exercises are there abandoned. "In death there is no remembrance of thee. In the grave who shall give thee thanks? Shall the dust praise thee, shall it declare thy truth? Shall thy loving-kindness be declared in the grave?" "Shall thy wonders be known in the dark? and thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?"

The body itself, that fine piece of divine workmanship, so fearfully and wonderfully made, is here broken and thrown by as a vessel wherein is no pleasure. The hands have forgotten their enterprise. The cherubic tints have left the cheek, cold and pallid. The bright eye is quenched in darkness; and the tongue that excited so much emotion is muteness itself. Nor is this all. There is enough in the body, even while living, to prevent all glorying in the

flesh. It had its humbling appetites and infirmities: it was the seat of diseases which sometimes required all the force of duty and friendship to discharge the offices of humanity. See Job covered with sore boils from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, sitting among the ashes, and scraping himself with a potsherd. But let the anatomist take off from a human body that translucent veil, the skin; and then observe the hideous and shocking spectacle of flesh, and sinews, and muscles. View the skeleton, when every thing is removed from the dry bones. But see the body in the various stages of decomposition and putrefaction—What an exhibition of expense and finery is that funeral! Why all this pomp and artifice? It is in honour of the deceased. Why then do you not show to the multitude of gazers, "the Principal concealed, for whom you make the mighty stir?" You dare not. You have been obliged to enclose, and solder, and coffin him up. What tears bedew the grave at parting! Why then do you part? Why not take and preserve at home "the deceased angel?" You dare not—The form is intolerable. You must bury your dead out of your sight, and shut too the door, and inscribe over it—

> "How loved, how valued once, avails thee not,
> To whom related, or by whom begot:
> A heap of dust alone remains of thee;
> 'Tis all thou art, and all the proud shall be."

Thirdly, We may notice it as *an universal receptacle.* "I know that thou wilt bring me to death; and to the house appointed for all living."

Then how large its *extent!* Though the memorials of death do not every where meet your sight; and particular spaces are properly appropriated for interment; and some of them are very capacious and crowded: yet there is scarcely a spot, that holds not some portion of humanity. You feel as you march over a field of battle; you feel as you walk through a church-yard, especially in the darkness of the night. But are the dead only there? Perhaps some one has been turned to dust beneath the pew in which you are now sitting. Perhaps your house stands, and your garden blossoms, over the remains of some, who were once as active as you. What walk can you take, and not trample on the ashes of those who are gone before?

"What is the world itself? Thy world?—A *grave.*
Where is the dust that has not been alive?
The spade, the plough disturbs our ancestors:
From human mould we reap our daily bread.
O'er devastations we blind revels keep.
Whole buried towns support the dancer's heel.
As nature, wide our ruins spread; and death
Inhabits all things but the *thought of man!*"

Then, how *numerous its victims!* How soon the power of calculation fails in reckoning up the myriads that do occupy, and will occupy this dark abode. Seven hundred and fifty millions constitute the population of the globe. These in less than a century will be all lodged in the grave. Yet what are these to the multitudes which will follow, and to the immensities that precede!—"Every man shall draw after him, as there have been innumerable before him!"

Then, how *impartial its demands!* Infinitely diversified as the ways of human life are, here they all approximate and unite. The paths of glory lead but to the grave. Here come the nobles with their titles, and princes with their crowns, and scholars with their volumes.

"Why all this toil, the triumph of an hour?
What, though we wade in wealth, or soar in fame,
Earth's highest station ends in—'Here he lies!'
And dust to dust concludes her noblest song!"

"One dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet. His breasts are full of milk, and his bones are moistened with marrow. And another dieth in the bitterness of his soul, and never eateth with pleasure. They shall lie down alike in the dust, and the worms shall cover them." There lies the babe that perished in the porch of life; and there the thrice greyheaded Parr. The beautiful and the deformed, the rich and the poor, there meet together. "There the prisoners rest together: the small and the great are there; and the servant is free from his master." "Do not all go to one place? All are of the dust, and all turn to dust again!"

Then, how *painful its separations!* If it be appointed for all living, then must it entomb the friend that is as thine own soul; the child of thy love, the wife of thy bosom, the guide of thy youth. There Mary goes to the grave to weep

over Lazarus. There David cries, "I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan." Who has not sustained some bereavement? Who has not some spot the dearest on earth, and rendered sacred by a deposit more precious than gold? Thus every man feels an interest in the grave. It is to him the residence not of strangers and foreigners, but of kindred who detach him hence. What do I here, and what have I here? I am related not to the living, but the dead—There lie all that bound me to earth. "Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and my acquaintance into darkness."

Then, how *personal its claims!* If it be appointed for all living, it must require me. I may escape a thousand other things that befall my fellow-creatures; but I must follow them here. I see, in *their* end, the emblem, the pledge, the certainty of my own. No privilege can exempt me here. I am going the way of all the earth. "*If I wait, the grave is* mine *house.*"

But surely there is *one* exception to be found. We read of a peculiar people, and who are not to be numbered among the nations. They are the children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. The Christian—is not *he* free? No. There is no entering heaven, but under ground. Yet, even in those things in which the Christian seems confounded with others, he is really, he is divinely distinguished. The Christian can view the grave with an eye of faith, as well as of sense. He can view it not only in connection with that sin which has reigned unto death, but in connection with that grace which reigns through righteousness unto eternal life. Though he cannot escape it, he need not dread it. He is prepared to meet it, to encounter it, to vanquish it, to triumph over it, to insult it; to say, "O grave, where is thy victory?"—Let us pass to the

II. Part of our subject, and consider WHAT THE CHRISTIAN CAN FIND TO RELIEVE THE SCENE.

People seem to have found a kind of satisfaction when entering the grave, from the thought that they are going to join their connections. Hence, as well as from the pride of distinction, sprang the mausoleums of the great, a kind of family-tomb. Hence, among the Jews, the frequency of sepulchres in their gardens; where they seemed still to

retain the departed near them, and maintain a kind of communion with them, and feel soothed at the thought of blending with them, in the exclusive and endeared abode. Hence Ruth said to Naomi, "Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried." Jacob said, "I will go down into the grave to my son." "But I will lie with my fathers; and thou shalt carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their burying-place." "And he charged them, and said unto them, I am to be gathered unto my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite." "In the cave that is in the field Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite for a possession of a burying-place; there they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah." Nor was this only the language of faith, but of nature. In vain I am told there is no reason in the thing, since there is no conscious community in the grave. There are beautiful insects, too fine for dissection; yet there is in them all the reality of organization. There are sentiments to be felt, rather than explained—instincts of the heart: it is nature—it is the God of nature that speaks in them. We often feel most forcibly an impression whose cause is hidden and undefinable. What occurs to the mind in a kind of distinct proposition may be met, and argued, and repulsed: but a principle whose influence is really, yet secretly and unaccountably exerted, resembles those invisible laws in the natural world, whose agency we can neither deny nor withstand. To which we may add, that whatever tends to diminish the gloom of the grave, and to render it more inviting, is to be cherished, and not despised.—But we have something superior to all. There are five things which a Christian should think of with regard to the grave. Jesus himself has been in it. It is a place of repose. It receives only a part of the man. It will not be able to retain this always. It must not only restore it, but restore it improved.

First, When you think of the grave, remember that *Jesus himself has been there.* How far did he, who is all your salvation and all your desire, carry his humiliation! He descended into the lowest parts of the earth. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so the Son of Man was three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. He not only died, but was buried, according to

the Scripture. And hereby he not only said, see how certain my death is; but, are you afraid to enter the grave? I will go in before you, and render it safe and attractive.—Yes, the Lily of the Valley, and the Rose of Sharon, was laid there, and has left a long perfume. Whenever I am committing the remains of a believer to the tomb, I seem to hear the angel saying, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay."

> "The graves of all his saints he blest,
> And softened every bed;
> Where should the dying members rest,
> But with the dying Head?"

Secondly, When you think of the grave, remember *It is a place of repose.* Hence Job adds, "I have made my bed in the darkness." But who sleeps the less sound for the darkness? The darkness aids our sleep. And, who, after the fatigues of the day, dislikes or dreads the refreshment of night? The sleep of a labouring man is sweet. He lies down and forgets his sorrow, and remembers his misery no more.

God has a hiding-place for his people even in *life;* and often says, "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thee also for a little season, until the indignation be overpast." But here the clouds return after the rain; and as long as earth is their abode, bonds and afflictions abide them. Therefore, says Job, "O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave; that thou wouldest keep me secret until thy wrath be past; that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me!" God takes away his people from the evil to come. He foresees it; but they do not. He therefore lays hold of them, and places them in a sheltered retreat. And you often clearly see, after their removal, what some of your connexions would have suffered had they continued here a little longer. "Ah!" says one, whose purposes are broken off, (his very heart desolated within him,) "Ah! what should *I* have escaped, had I been allowed an earlier retirement. For now should I have lain still and been quiet; I should have slept: then had I been at rest." Yes—from the snares and vexations of the world; from the reproaches and persecutions of the ungodly; from the perfidy or weakness of friends; from the temptations of the devil; from the conflicts of flesh and

spirit; *there* all will be peace; all will be quietness; all will be assurance for ever. "*There* the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary are at rest."

Thirdly, When you think of the grave, remember *that it has only a partial empire;* it only receives what is *corporeal and mortal.* Here we are not going to enter into metaphysical reasonings. We understand but little of the connexion of spirit with matter; yet why should we doubt the possibility of its existence separate from it? Are we not conscious of some mental operations, in which the body seems to take no share? And when the powers of the body are suspended in sleep, is there not something that sees without eyes, and hears without ears? Do we not even then dream? and often with an amazing degree of activeness?

The heathens seemed to allow that something in man could exist, and would either suffer or enjoy, independently of the body—for of the revival of the body they never had the least notion. But we turn at once to the Scriptures, the only source of satisfactory information in a case like this. "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the Spirit shall return unto God who gave it." Hear the statement of the Apostle. "Absent from the body, and present with the Lord." And his own wish expressed to the Philippians: "I long to depart to be with Christ, which is far better:" *i. e.* far better for him, though to abide in the flesh was more needful for them. Now if he did not believe that his soul would be immediately with Christ, his desire is perfectly unintelligible. For by dying, he would have been no sooner with Christ, than he would by remaining alive, as to time; nor so near, as to enjoyment; for here he had access to him and intercourse with him. How undeniably is this distinction admitted by our Saviour, and made the rule of his most solemn admonitions. "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." "I say unto you, my friends, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear; fear him, which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him." To which we may add his promise to the thief on the cross: which, though often tortured, still refuses to support any other principle: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, this day thou shalt be with me in Paradise."

This being premised and proved, we observe, that the souls of believers are in their bodies, as the lamps of Gideon in the pitchers: at midnight the pitchers are broken, and the lamps shine forth, and the victory is obtained. This, to drop the metaphor, this is the ground of consolation taken by the Apostle: "And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness."

Fourthly, When you think of the grave, remember *that its reign is not only limited as to subject, but as to duration.* Even the body, which it does receive, will not, cannot be retained by it always; therefore the Apostle adds, "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you."

The grave is called our long home, not because it is afar off, for we live in the very neighbourhood; but because our stay there will be long, compared with our stay in our present home. This, indeed, will not apply to all. Some at the last day will have been buried only a year, or a week, or a day. The sexton will be performing his office on some at the very instant; and the reanimated corpse will burst the coffin before it be confined in the grave; and the attendants be all changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. But *you* will lie there till the heavens be no more. *Many* will have been found dwelling there for thousands of years. Yet whatever be the length of the occupancy, it will have an end, and all the inhabitants will be sent forth.

And why should it be thought incredible that God should raise the dead? With God all things are possible. But you say, appearances do not render it probable. We see nothing more of the body we inter; yea, we know it dissolves and returns to dust. Yet was not that oak once an acorn? Did not that beautiful insect once lie in its little mummy grave? but it burst its confinement, and now owns the air and sky. What do men produce from the rudest elements? Show a stranger to the process, a figure of glass; and then place before him the bare materials from which it is deduced. "How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain; but God giveth it a body as

it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body." But how decisive is the testimony of the Scripture! The doctrine is found even in the Old Testament. Our Saviour found it in the Pentateuch; and deduced it from the declaration of God at the burning bush: "I am the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living:" for all live unto him—purpose and accomplishment being the same with him. In Isaiah we read, "Thy dead men shall live; together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust, for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." Many have supposed, with much probability, that here is a promise of the resurrection of believers through their union with Christ. But if the evidence of this supposition be not strong enough to bear such an argument, it is undeniable, that the deliverance of the people of God from a state of the lowest degradation and hopelessness, is here held forth by an image taken from the resurrection of the dead. And Ezekiel employs the same image in the vision of the dry bones, raised to union and life. And what can more clearly prove that the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead was in those days a known and popular sentiment? For an image employed to represent any thing in the way of allegory or metaphor, whether in poetry or prophecy, must be generally and well understood, or the end of its appropriation is defeated. In the New Testament, it is more than merely admitted. It is every where affirmed, and reasoned from, as an important principle. And how commonly the notion and belief of it prevailed among the Jews, appears from the language of Martha; "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." And from the defence of Paul before Felix: "And have hope towards God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust."

Here also we have it in fact and example. Several were raised again; and one of them after he had lain in the grave four days, and the process of corruption must have more than commenced. But Jesus himself arose: and he is not only an instance, but a pledge. If ever an event was proved, it was the resurrection of Christ. But if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some, that there is no resurrection of the dead? But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that

sleep. His resurrection is the claim, as well as the proof of ours—"Because I live, ye shall live also." Our nature was revived in his person; and thus we are quickened with Christ, and raised up, and made to sit with him in the heavenly places.

But every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits; *afterwards* they that are Christ's, at *his coming*. Our Saviour repeatedly said, "I will raise him up at the *last day*." For this is the period appointed for the resurrection: and the reason of the appointment, in a measure, appears. If each body was raised in succession previously, the order of nature and providence would be perpetually invaded, and miracles would be constantly required. And not only for this reason, but also for the greater honour of the Redeemer, this greatest and sublimest exertion of Almightiness is reserved for the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ. Then he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe. *Then*, O Death! he will be thy plagues; *then*, O Grave! he will be thy destruction; and repentance shall be hid from his eyes.

Finally, Remember, to complete your comfort, *that what you resign to the grave will not only be restored, but infinitely improved.* As Egypt was compelled not only to allow the Israelites to depart, but to send them away enriched; and as Cyrus not only gave up the captives from Babylon, but ordered them to be helped with silver and gold, and with goods, and beasts, beside their own free-will offerings to the house of God; so will it be in the resurrection. Believers will not only leave the grave as they entered it—they will be, not only delivered, but exalted; they will not only have life, but have it more abundantly.

I deem this an important part of our subject: you will therefore allow me a little enlargement. Whoever has looked over the early attacks on Christianity will have observed that the pagan philosophers not only denied the doctrine of the resurrection, but affected to contemn the thing itself. They considered it a bane, rather than a benefit; and represented it as imprisoning us again, and burdening us again, after the soul had been freed from its fetters and load. And some Christians really seem to be almost like-minded. Few appear to consider it a prize; at least, such a prize as Paul did when he said, "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." And the reason is probably this. They now know the dis-

advantages of the body, and are insensibly lead to judge of the future by their feelings at present. And indeed if the bodies raised up were no better than those laid down, the resurrection would excite but little eagerness of desire. But what saith the Scriptures? Do not the sacred writers supremely lead forward your minds to this, and point your highest hope, not to the intermediate state, but to your re-embodied ?—"He shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." "I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day." Man, in his primeval state, was embodied: and if hereafter we could attain perfection and happiness without our bodies, what need would there be for their re-production from the dust? Yet, according to the views and feelings of many, this grandest exertion of divine power seems to be entirely, or almost, unnecessary.

But let us not be wiser than our Maker. However incapable we may be of reasoning convincingly upon the subject, there must be an accession of perfection and happiness to be enjoyed in a state of re-union with the body, unattainable in a separate state. The life of a mere spirit must differ much from its subsistence in a corporeal organization. Without the latter it can hardly connect itself, for want of a medium, with the material universe, the new heavens and the new earth. It must be a stranger to the pleasures that depend on our senses and passions; and also those which arise from imagination. Was it not a privilege for Enoch and Elias to enter heaven embodied? "But their bodies were changed." It is allowed. And ours will be changed also; for flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. And what a change must that be that *can* fit us for such a state! We are therefore not to think of our future incarnation, by our present. The body then will not be a prison, a burden; it will not be a hindrance, but a help; and will even subserve the soul in knowledge, holiness, benevolence, and enjoyment.

There are two ways by which the Scripture elevates our conceptions of the resurrection-body. The first is, to compare, or rather contrast it with the body we now have. "So is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption"—Not only incapable of defilement, but of dissolution, of declension, of injury; impassive; immortal. "It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory"—No longer composed of base elements, subsisting

on gross supplies, subject to the same laws with the beasts that perish, employed in low and degrading toils and pursuits. "It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power"—No longer fatigued with a little exertion, and requiring long insensibilities of sleep, and frequent returns of food, to renew its strength and keep it fit for action; but capable of serving Him in his temple day and night, without languor and without repose. "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body"—not a spirit, but spiritual. Not spiritual in its essence, but in the refinement of its senses, and indulgences, and functions, and use. For "There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body."

The second is, to hold forth the conformity it will bear to the body of our Saviour. "And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural: and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." "It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but this we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And this likeness takes in the body as well as the soul. What a body was that, which after his resurrection could render itself visible and invisible at pleasure; which walls and doors could not exclude; which moved with the ease and expedition of thought; which ascended up on high without impulsion; which appeared to Saul, and at noon-day shone above the brightness of the sun; in which he is now worshipped by all the angels of God; and in which he will judge the world in righteousness, and reign for ever and ever! But this, O believer, is the model of thy destination. "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

—Let this assurance and confidence lead us to bless God for revelation, and the explicitness of its discoveries. With us the darkness is past, and the true light shineth. And what does it leave undiscovered that is important to our

safety, welfare, and comfort? Whatever reasonings and conjectures the heathen had with regard to a future state, it is well known they gave up the body. No one for a moment ever supposed that the grave could re-open, and the *dead* arise. When Paul was at Athens (where the immortality of the soul was frequently asserted,) and preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection, even the men of science, forgetting the gravity that became their character, "mocked!" and said, "what will this babbler say?" But there is not a peasant or a child in our land of vision, but knows that the *dead*, small and great, will stand before God.

—This prospect should comfort you in the loss of your connexions. You are not forbidden to feel—"Your grief becomes you, and your tears are just." Jesus wept. But "Weeping must not hinder sowing." "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him." "But they were so dear!" They were. But they are much dearer now. They have left all their imperfections, and all their sorrows behind—

> "They sleep in Jesus, and are blest.
> How sweet their slumbers are;
> From suffering and from sin released,
> And freed from every care."

And this is not all. "Martha! Thy brother shall rise again. Rachel! You weep for your child, and refuse to be comforted, because he is not"—"Why was this loved babe born? why was I torn with pain at his birth, and again rent with anguish at his death? What purpose has his brief history answered? What has now become of him?" These, and a thousand other inquiries which the busy mind will ask, could never have been answered, but for this book,—never so precious as in the hour of trouble. There the mystery is explained. There you learn that a sparrow falleth not to the ground without your Heavenly Father; that the present is only the threshold of existence; that the soul of this infant is now in the Shepherd's bosom; and that his body will not perish, but be seen again, "all heavenly and divine." "Refrain thy voice from weeping, and

thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord; and thy children shall come again from the land of the enemy." O ye Children! who are yet spared, and are now responsible for your conduct; let this comfort be put into our hearts with regard to you. Remember your Creator. Live and die in the Lord; and then, though we lose you for a moment, you shall be restored to us, equal to the angels, and be the children of God, being the children of the resurrection. And, you Parents! endeared by so much affection, and whose venerable looks remind us of separation; fear not to go in good time. We will rock the cradle of your age; and comfort you on the bed of languishing; and kiss your cold cheeks, and close your eyes, and lay you in the dust; but we shall see you again; and our heart shall rejoice, and our joy no one taketh from us.

—And let this animate you when looking towards your own grave. And surely some of you *must* be thinking of it. Your complaints, your infirmities, your years, *must* lead you to ask, How long have I to live? Well! if you are a Christian, you have every reason to think of it with resignation and pleasure. God says to you, as he did to Jacob trembling on the confines of Egypt, "Be not afraid to go down: I will go down with thee; and I will bring thee up again." He will watch over your sleeping dust, and he will bid it rise. If it be trying to part with your companion the body, remember it is only for a time; and it will be restored to you in the image of God's Son. Say then, "I am not following cunningly devised fables. I build upon a rock. It is true, sin takes away my health and breath, and lays my body down in the grave. But I hear *him* saying among the tombs, I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die. At the sound of this, I take courage and go forward. I am not stumbling over a precipice, uncertain where I shall fall, and not knowing that I shall ever rise. I descend into the grave by a gentle flight of steps, leaning on my Beloved and my Friend—I choose to die. It is thou, my God, my Saviour, who callest me; and I give up my life into thy hand, assuredly persuaded, that thou art able and willing and engaged to return it." This is not empty declamation. I have taken the very language from the lips of a dying saint—I stood by—and after she had surveyed her reduced and wrinkled hands and arms, she ended her

address, (and life too, a few moments after,) with the words of the sweet Psalmist in our British Israel:—

"Oft have I heard thy threat'nings roar,
And oft endur'd the grief:
And when thy hand hath press'd me sore,
Thy grace was my relief.

By long experience I have known
Thy sov'reign pow'r to save;
At thy command I venture down
Securely to the grave.

When I lie buried deep in dust,
My flesh shall be thy care;
Those with'ring limbs with thee I trust,
To raise them strong and fair."

—But what is all this to some of you, my brethren? Let me speak freely; and do not consider me as your enemy, because I tell you the truth. Who of you have not frequently been at the grave of a neighbour, a friend, a relation? Sometimes you have been deeply impressed there. But how soon did the impression wear off; and you renewed your pursuit of the world, as eagerly as if you had never heard, never seen, never felt that all was vanity and vexation of spirit.

What do you think of your own grave? Perhaps the thought never enters your mind; or if it does, you deem it an impertinent and hateful intruder; and you drive it from you, as you would a serpent. Some of you have been led down very nearly to the grave, by perilous accident or disease. And how did it appear? Did it not seem an awful thing to enter an invisible and changeless state? Did you not turn your face to the wall and weep? If ever you prayed, was it not then? "O spare me a little, that I may recover strength, before I go hence and be no more." Where now are the confessions and vows of that hour? Perhaps the very scene is rendered disagreeable by your apostacy from your convictions—you endeavour to forget it—and you shun the Christian, and the Minister you called in, because they are now witnesses against you.

Here is an awful case. And what can you do? If you wait, the grave is your house—and you know you must enter it. You may play the infidel: you may deny the truth of the Gospel; but it is useless to deny that you are

on the borders of the grave—you may reason about it; you may look up and curse God and your King. But you cannot escape. Perhaps you would be shocked to be unburied; but this is not likely to be your case. You may have a good grave—a much better grave than many of your neighbours; and it will afford your body ease; and in this sense, the clods of the valley will be sweet about you. But is there not a spirit in man? Where will your soul be while your body is resting in the grave? Yea, and how is the body to be disposed of at last?

The Lord Jesus will raise *you*, as well as his people; but his agency will have a very different principle. The resurrection of the godly will be performed by him, as their Lord and Redeemer, under the administration of grace; but the wicked will be raised by him as the Ruler and the Judge, under an administration of law; for they are under the law, and not under grace. They refused the ransom, and died in their guilt; and the grave received *them* as criminals in charge bound over to justice—for as many as are under the law, are under the curse; and as they live, and die, so they rise the same.

There is also a difference in the bodies revived. What the bodies of the righteous will be, you have heard: but they that sow to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap *corruption*. The evils attached to *your* bodies will not be left in the grave, but will cleave to them for ever; and they will inherit the seeds of disease and the principles of deformity; and they will have the same raging appetites and passions—but all unindulged.

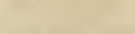
The conditions following also differ. "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth: they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." Thus both the chief butler and chief baker were released at the same time, and from the same confinement—the one to be advanced, and the other to be executed. The grave, to the believer, is an avenue to heaven. It is the dress-chamber, in which the Church puts on her beautiful garments, to arise and meet the Lord in the air. But to others, it is the condemned cell in which the malefactor is lodged till he is led out to punishment.

That can hardly be called a deliverance, that releases a man from a bad condition and consigns him to a worse. It would be well if the bodies of the wicked could remain where by death they are deposited: but this is impossible. The bodies—those bodies which you have so indulged, so pampered, so adorned; the bodies which death delivers to the worms, the resurrection will deliver to the flames!

And where are you now? Take the hemp or the steel, and destroy yourself. Ah! this too is impossible. The soul is instantly before God. You have got rid only of one part of you. And even the part you have demolished, will be re-animated and rendered invulnerable—and you shall seek death, but shall not find it; and shall desire to die, but death shall flee from you.

—But why do I thus address you? It is that, by awakening your consciences from a fatal security, I may in time dispose you to ask, "What must I do to be saved?" I am sure of this, that I would not have enlarged upon your awful condition had I not believed that there is hope in Israel concerning this thing; and that none of you are excluded from it unless those who exclude themselves. But so it is. The Saviour stands before you in all the combined forms of power and of pity. He is able—he is willing to save unto the uttermost. Seek him while he may be found. Call upon him while he is near. Wait for no qualifications to recommend you to his gracious notice. He requires none. If Paul and Silas were here, they would say, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Plead not, as an objection, your unworthiness. This should only increase the earnestness of your application. Behold the number and the character of those who have obtained mercy. Read his word; and hear him not only allowing, but inviting and commanding you to approach, with the assurance, "him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." Obey his voice. Commit yourselves into his hands. And you shall never come into condemnation, but shall pass from death unto life. And though even then, if you wait, the grave is your house, it will only be a peaceful and temporary residence to sleep in: and you will finally enter another house, a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

LECTURE XII.



THE CHRISTIAN, IN HEAVEN.

"*Who hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.*"—2 Tim. i. 10.

Did the heathen then know nothing of life and immortality before? They had their schools and their philosophers. Some of them acquired great distinction and fame. Their sagacity and learning were deep and extensive. They were enriched by a long succession of preceding discoveries and improvements. In the various arts and sciences they much excelled; and he that would see a fine piece of statuary must fetch it from the ruins of Greece and Rome. But, as to the things of God, we are assured by one who was well qualified to judge, "They were vain in their imaginations: their foolish heart was darkened. And professing themselves wise, they became fools."

They had indeed their surmisings concerning a future state; they brought forward some strong probabilities in its favour; and, aided in their reasonings by hints of unacknowledged tradition, some fine and worthy sentiments escaped from them. But they never taught life and immortality as a doctrine; they never employed it as a principle and motive. They had no authority to publish it to others; and not one of them was sure of the thing in his own mind. And, as Paley well remarks, "Conjecture and opinion are not knowledge; and in religion, nothing more is known than is proved." Thus the world by *wisdom* knew not God; and if this was the case with the wise and the learned, what was it with the common people, with the old, with children, with the busy and engrossed, who could only eat their bread by the sweat of their brow? The Apostle, therefore, speaking of the Gentiles, says, they

were left, "If haply they might feel after Him and find Him"—an expression borrowed from the blind, who grope for their object, and their way, uncertain of success, and in danger of hurting themselves by their own efforts.

But did not the Jews know? We make no scruple to say, they did. To them pertained the oracles of God. He gave his word unto Jacob; his statutes and his judgments unto Israel; and dealt not so with any other people. David said, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." Jacob, even in death, was "waiting for the salvation of God." How explicit was the profession of Job, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another, although my reins be consumed within me."

—How then could "life and immortality be brought to light through the gospel?" We answer. The word gospel may be taken two ways. The one more general, for revelation at large; and thus it is to be understood when it is said, "The gospel was preached to the Jews, but the word preached did not profit them." And thus it is to be understood when it is said, "The scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, in thee shall all nations be blessed."—The other is more restricted, and signifies the evangelical dispensation; commencing with the ministry of our Lord, and including not only the discourses which he personally delivered, but all the inspired communications of the Apostles. Now, if we take the word gospel here in the former sense, the meaning is, that it brought life and immortality to light *really*. But if taken in the latter sense, then the meaning is, that it brought life and immortality to light *pre-eminently*. And it must be confessed that this is the more common acception of the term, and so it is required to be taken in the passage before us. The dawn was visible before; but now the day appeared. To the Jews the Sun of Righteousness was below the horizon; on us he has risen with healing under his wings: and Christians are all the children of the light and of the day; God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect. Hence our Saviour said to his disciples—not comparing them with the Gentiles,

but with their own nation: "Many prophets and righteous men have desired to see the things that ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear the things which ye hear, and have not heard them. But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear."

Therefore, while for a knowledge of life and immortality we repair to the Scripture *only*, we must look *peculiarly* into the New Testament, where we are furnished with clearer decisions, and ampler representations; and above all, with illustrations and pledges, in a risen and glorified Saviour. Here again the unrivalled excellency of Christianity appears. How unsatisfactory, how cold, how mean, how gross, how absurd, how disgusting, are the intimations of Deism, the Elysian fields of Pagan poetry, the rewards of Hindooism, the Paradise of Mahomedism,—when placed by the side of the "life and immortality brought to light through the Gospel!"

Through the discoveries of this Gospel, we are going to finish our Series of Lectures, by viewing the Christian in his final destination. You have seen him—In CHRIST, the source of all his principles, and consolations, and hopes. You have seen him—Withdrawing into his CLOSET, and dealing much with God alone. You have seen him—Leaving his retirement, and stepping into his FAMILY, and with his house serving God. You have seen him—Joining himself to God's people; and walking in the CHURCH in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. You have seen him—Safe and sanctified in PROSPERITY. You have seen him—Supported and comforted in ADVERSITY. You have seen him—In his SPIRITUAL SORROWS hanging his harp on the willows. You have seen—The JOY of the Lord his strength. You have surveyed him—In the VALLEY of the shadow of DEATH; and have seen that his end is peace. You have seen him—though laid in the GRAVE, not left there; but rising into newness of life. And now we are to view Him—IN HEAVEN. Four things will engage our attention. The

I. REGARDS THE DEGREE OF OUR PRESENT KNOWLEDGE OF THE HEAVENLY WORLD.—The

II. THE MANNER IN WHICH THE SCRIPTURE AIDS US IN CONCEIVING OF A SUBJECT SO VAST AND DIFFICULT.—The

III. ITS PRINCIPAL CONSTITUENTS.—And

IV. THE INSTRUCTIONS AND IMPRESSIONS WE SHOULD

DERIVE FROM THE CONTEMPLATION OF THE CHRISTIAN IN THE POSSESSION OF IT.

I. REGARDS THE DEGREE OF OUR PRESENT KNOWLEDGE OF THE HEAVENLY WORLD.

Have you never, my brethren, when perusing the sacred writings, been struck with a kind of contradiction? Here, in one place, you say, I read that "life and immortality *are* brought to light;" and in another, I am told of "the glory that *shall* be revealed." In one, I am assured, that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." And yet in another it is said, "God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." But this apparent contradiction supplies us with the fact we are remarking; and the Apostle John has fully expressed it when he says, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but this we know, that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." That is, we know something of it; but much, very much, remains concealed. We have some developments in the sacred pages, and in the illuminations of the Holy Ghost—

> Yet we are only able to survey
> Dawning of beams, and glimmerings of day;
> Heaven's fuller affluence mocks our dazzled sight;
> Too great its swiftness, and too strong its light.

Of the full disclosure of the heavenly world, there is a moral and a natural prevention. It would not be proper, if it were possible: and it would not be possible, if it were proper. Let us explain.

The only wise God has attempered even our senses to our present condition. The measure in which we possess them, is admirably fitted to the functions and enjoyments of life. It is easy to perceive that if our feeling was more exquisite it would annoy us; that if our hearing was increased, it would prove our inconvenience? and that if our eye was to become microscopic, we should be afraid to move. It is precisely the same with our knowledge. This is adjusted in conformity to the claims of our present sphere of action and happiness. We are now in a mixed state, where sorrow is necessary as well as pleasure; and darkness as

well as light. Some duties, if they do not entirely result from our ignorance, are enforced by it. Witness the admonition of the Saviour, "Watch, *for* ye *know not* the day or the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh." We are in a course of trial and discipline; where the grand principle of our training is confidence; where we are to walk by faith, and not by sight: for we are to honour God by trusting in him; and to follow the example of our father Abraham, who "by faith, when he was called to go out into a place which he should afterwards receive for an inheritance, obeyed, and went out, not knowing whither he went"—satisfied with his Guide, and the assurance he had received; and leaving all the inquiries which restless curiosity, and proud reasonings, and conferring with flesh and blood would have gendered, as unworthy a thought.

We may venture to affirm, that if heaven was now fully laid open to our view, it would be so impressive and engrossing, as to render every thing here insignificant and uninteresting, and loosen and detach us from all our present engagements. St. Pierre tells us of his returning to France, in a ship that had been absent several years in the East Indies. And "when," says he, "the crew approached their native country, they were all eagerness to discern it. Some of them mounted the rigging: some of them employed the glass. By and bye an exclamation was heard, 'Yonder it is!' Then they became thoughtful and listless. But when they drew nearer, and began to discover the tops of the hills and the towers, that reminded them of the spots in which they had been brought up, they knew not how to contain themselves. They dressed themselves in their best apparel; they brought out the presents designed for their connexions. But when the vessel entered the harbour, and they saw their friends and relations on the quay, stretching forth their hands to embrace them, many of them leaped from the ship, and other hands were employed to bring it to its moorings." Ah! Christians, could you see the better country from which you were born, and to which you are bound—could you behold your connexions there, ready to receive you; your stations would soon be deserted, and other agents would be wanted to carry on their concern.

We go further: and we say that the full disclosure of heaven would not only derange the present order of things, but endanger, injure, and destroy the very beings to whom it was presented. Our physical powers have their limits;

and from many instances in the Scriptures, we see the effects of an excess of excitement or impression. Accustomed as she was to grandeur, the Queen of Sheba, at the sight of Solomon's glory, had no more spirit in her. Jacob fainted away when he saw the wagons to convey him to his son Joseph. When the angel approached Daniel, there was no strength in him, for his comeliness was turned in him to corruption. And though John had often reclined on his bosom; when the Saviour appeared to him, he fell at his feet as dead. No; we have not eyes to see that brilliancy now; we have not ears to endure that melody now; we have not frames to bear up under that weight of glory now. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God."

The full knowledge therefore is no more practicable than it is expedient. We have no adequate medium of receiving the communication; and heaven entering the mind now, is like the sun entering the house through a few little crevices, or the sea flowing through the cavity of a straw. There is an amazing force in language, as we see in some most powerful and affecting works: but words, however chosen, can no more express heaven, than paint can do justice to light, or heat, or joy. All our modes of apprehending and feeling, are not refined and exalted enough to take a complete hold of an object so peculiar and spiritual. Even our thoughts, that seem to "leave dull mortality behind," here labour and strive in vain: and one of the sublimest understandings that ever soared, even also when inspired, could only exclaim, "O! how great is the goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee."

This, however, is not to be taken absolutely. With all our deficiencies, we are not ignorant of the reality of this glory: nor are we unfurnished with such a *degree* of information concerning it, as our duty and our welfare allow and require.—And we proceed,

II. To observe HOW THE SCRIPTURE AIDS US IN CONCEIVING OF A SUBJECT SO DIFFICULT AND VAST.

It does this four ways.

First, It enables us to conceive of it *negatively*. Thus it tells us what it is not, removing from it every thing we know and feel to be dreadful, or trying, or distressing. And such representations we are prepared to understand

and to feel, by a sad and common experience. For often in a world like this, our most lively apprehension of good is the removal of evil; and our most inviting notion of joy is the cessation of grief. Hence the sacred writers assure us, "They shall hunger no more, nor thirst any more. Neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. There shall be no more curse. God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away."

Secondly, It enables us to conceive of it *figuratively*. Figures are like dress: they are now used for ornament, but they were introduced from necessity. They were originally used not to embellish, but to explain; and we want them for the same purpose still. How can the mind, while incarnate, any more discern than operate, but through the senses, the mediums of all sensation and reflection? How can we reach the distant, but by the intervention of what is near? How can we understand what is difficult, but by the application of what is familiar? How can we hold communion with things unseen and eternal, but by means of those which are seen and temporal? What wonder therefore that the wisdom of God should have levied a tax on all that is inviting in the intercourses of life, and in the productions and appearances of nature, to afford us emblems and illustrations? What wonder that we should read of rivers of pleasure; of trees of life; of robes and crowns; of feastings and mirth; of treasures and triumphs—and a thousand other images serving to hold forth a little of the better and enduring substance?

Thirdly, It helps us to conceive of it *comparatively*. It is a blessed change Christians now experience in passing from death unto life. Now are they the sons of God; and they have the Spirit of adoption. They have tasted that the Lord is gracious, and they know the things that are freely given them of God. But though the sacred writers view grace and glory as inseparable, and indeed consider them as the same in kind, they remark the difference there is in degree. Here the new creature is in its infancy; there it comes to the measure of the fulness of the stature of Christ. Here we are faithful over a few things; there we are made rulers over many things. Here we are saved by hope; there we possess the reality. Here we walk by faith; there by sight. Now we have the first-fruits of the Spirit;

then the whole harvest. Now we have the earnest; then the inheritance.

The Christian is therefore led from his present experience to his future attainments; and there is no way of his conceiving of heaven so affecting, as to take his best views and frames now, and to imagine them perfect and perpetual. He can learn more from one hour's communion with God, than from all the books he ever read. There are ordinances, in the use of which he is sometimes filled with all joy and peace in believing; and he can say,

> "If such the sweetness of the streams,
> What must the fountain be;
> Where saints and angels draw their bliss
> Immediately from thee?"

There are spots in his walks rendered sacred by his meeting his Lord and Saviour, and talking with him as a man talketh with his friend. In his vernal or autumnal retreats from the haunts of men, he has sat beneath the branches of his favourite tree, and has felt a perfect sympathy with all that is innocent and beautiful around him; and every thing earthly has been reduced to its just level in his regards; and the world has been conquered, having nothing to tempt and nothing to terrify; and even Death has been frownless; and, ready to be dissolved, he could sing,

> "O that the happy hour was come,
> To change my faith to sight;
> I shall behold my Lord at home
> In a diviner light."

Finally, It helps us to conceive of it *positively*. Telling us plainly, "That the upright shall dwell in His presence. That blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. That when he who is our life shall appear, we shall appear with him in glory. The righteous shall go away into life eternal." Yet what does this mean? What does it include?—And what

III. Are THE PRINCIPAL CONSTITUENTS OF THE HEAVENLY STATE?

Here we will not trifle, or pry into things which we have not seen. We shall not therefore enlarge on many topics which have commonly been connected with the subject; and the reason is, either because they are not so explicitly revealed, or because they are not so important in themselves, as those articles which we are going to enumerate.

It has been asked, Are there degrees in glory? We are persuaded there are. All analogy countenances the conclusion. We see diversities and inequalities pervading all the works of God. We know there are gradations among angels; for we read of thrones and dominions, principalities and powers. And though all Christians are redeemed by the same blood, and justified by the same righteousness, we know that there are degrees in grace. We know the good ground brought forth in some places thirty, in some sixty, in some a hundred fold. And the Apostle tells us, "Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour." But here we approve of the old illustration —however unequal in size these vessels may be, when plunged into this ocean, they shall all be equally filled.

It has been asked, Shall we know each other in heaven? Suppose you should not; you may be assured of this, that nothing will be wanting to your happiness. But O, you say, how would the thought affect me now! *There* is the babe that was torn from my bosom; how lovely then, but a cherub now! There is the friend, who was as mine own soul, with whom I took sweet counsel, and went to the house of God in company. There is the dear minister, whose preaching turned my feet into the path of peace, whose words were to me a well of life. There is the beloved mother, on whose knees I first laid my little hands to pray, and whose lips first taught my tongue to pronounce the name of Jesus! And are these removed from us for ever? Shall we recognize them no more. Cease your anxieties. Can memory be annihilated? Did not Peter, James, and John know Moses and Elias? Does not the Saviour inform us that the friends, benefactors have made of the mammon of unrighteousness, shall receive them into everlasting habitations? Does not Paul tell the Thessalonians, that they are his hope, and joy, and crown at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ?

Some would ask, Where is heaven? The universe is immense; but what particular part of it is assigned for the abode of the blessed, we cannot determine. It will pro-

bably be our present system renovated. May we not infer this from the words of the Apostle Peter—"Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat—Nevertheless, we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness."

But is it a *place?* Our Lord has a body like our own; and this cannot be omnipresent; and wherever he is corporeally, there is heaven—"*Where* I am, *there* shall also my servants be." Enoch and Elias have bodies; all the saints will have bodies; and these cannot be every where. We read of "the hope laid up for us in heaven." Of "entering into the holy place." "And I go," says Jesus to his disciples, "to prepare a place for you." But though it is really a place, we must chiefly consider it as a state. Even now, happiness does not essentially depend on what is without us. What was Eden to Adam and Eve, after sin had filled them with shame, and sorrow, and fear? But Paul in prison was infinitely happier than Cæsar on the throne of the nations.

What then are we allowed to reckon upon as the grand component parts of this exalted state? You may reckon upon

Pre-eminent knowledge. This is a world of action rather than of science; and the wiser men are, the more readily will they confess, that their present knowledge is unspeakably less than their ignorance. In whatever direction they attempt to penetrate, they are checked and baffled. Laboriousness attends every acquirement; and doubts and uncertainties diminish the value of every possession. The difference between the knowledge of Newton and the most illiterate peasant, will be far exceeded by the difference between the knowledge of the Christian on earth and in heaven. "The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun sevenfold as the light of seven days, when the Lord bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound." Now they understand as children, then they will know as men. Now they see through a glass darkly, but then face to face. Now they know in part, then they will know even as they are known. How delightful the thought—(amidst my present perplexities and obscurities, and under a sense of the penury of my talents, and in the want of means and opportunities

of improvement,) that "Messiah cometh who is called Christ; and that when he is come, he will tell us all things!" —You may reckon upon

Perfect Purity. This announcement has little attraction for those of you who never saw the beauty of holiness, and never abhorred yourselves, repenting in dust and ashes. But O! to a Christian it is worth dying for, to leave behind him the body of this death; this law in the members warring against the law of his mind; this inability to do the things that he would; this presence of evil ever with him; this liableness, this proneness to sin, even in his holy things, tarnishing every duty, wounding his own peace, and vexing and grieving the Spirit of his best Friend. To be freed from the enemy, and to have nothing in me that temptation can operate upon! To be incapable of ingratitude, and unbelief, and distractions in duty! To be innocent as the first Adam, and holy as the second!—What wonder the Christian exclaims, with Henry, "If *this* be heaven, O! that I was there."—You may reckon upon

The most *delightful associations.* We are formed for society. Much of our present happiness results from attachment and intercourse. Who knows not "the comforts of love?" Yea, and who also knows not its sorrows? We must weep when the objects of our affection weep. The arrows that pierce, wound friends also. We tolerate, we excuse their imperfections, but we feel them. And the thought of absence, separation, death—is dreariness, pain, and anguish. Hence, some have been ready to envy the unrelated, unconnected individual, whose anxieties and griefs are all personal. But it is not good for man to be alone in any condition. It is better to follow the course of Providence; to cherish the intimacies of life; to improve and to sanctify them: and under the disadvantages which now mingle with them, to look forward to a state, where the honey will be without the sting, and the rose without the thorn; and attachment and intercourse without the deductions arising from pain, and infirmities, and pity, and fear. In the Revelation, heaven is always presented as a social state. You have now few holy companions; the many are going another way. But, says John, "I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud

voice, saying, Salvation to *our* God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."—And you will have access to them all. You will there have the most *endeared* society: for it will include those to whom you were so tenderly related by nature, or pious friendship, and at parting with whom you sorrowed most of all, that you should see their face and hear their voice no more; and also those you left behind you with reluctance and anxiety in a world of sin and trouble. With these, your fellowship, after a brief separation, will be renewed, improved, and perfected for ever. The society will also be the most *dignified*, and without its present embarrassments. There are now personages so superior, that you seem reduced to nothing at the thought of them. You esteem and admire them; and wish to hear, and see, and mingle with them; yet you shrink from the presence of such genius, wisdom, and goodness. But you will feel nothing of this, when you sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Moses, and with prophets, and apostles, and martyrs, and reformers in the kingdom of God. Nor will *saints* only be your companions; but those glorious beings who never sinned, who excel in strength who are proverbial for their wisdom, who are your models in doing the will of God on earth, who are your ministering spirits, invisibly watching over you in your minority—the innumerable company of *angels*. And though they will not be able to say, He hath redeemed *us* unto God by his blood; they will cry with a loud voice, (though you will endeavour to be louder,) "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."—You may reckon upon

The most *glorious employment*. I should as soon think that heaven was a nursery of vice, as a state of inaction. Indolence is no more irreconcilable to virtue, than perfectly incompatible with happiness.

> "A want of occupation is not rest.
> A mind quite vacant is a mind distressed."

All the powers conferred by a wise Creator necessarily imply their application and use: and the more life any being possesses, the more energy and activeness will distinguish him, unless he is in a state of perversion or restraint. But what are the employments of heaven? Dr. Watts has spe-

culated much on this subject. Some of his conjectures are probable, and all pleasing. But we dare not follow him. Of this we are sure, that there will be none of those mean and degrading toils which arise now from the necessities of our nature, or from luxury and pride. Neither will there be any of those religious exercises which pertain to a state of imperfection. Repentance will be hid from our eyes. There will be no more warfare and watchings. Neither will there be any more prayers with strong cryings and tears. Yet it is said, "They serve him day and night in his temple." And their powers will be equal to the work; for neither the fervency nor the duration of the service will produce exhaustion or languor. The common notion of always standing up and singing, is too childish to be refuted. We have no doubt but that there may be stated assemblies for adoration and praise. But Christians are said to be still praising him now; and they do this, not by acts of worship only, but by performing his will, by filling up their stations in life properly, and promoting the welfare of all around them: and his work even here is honourable and glorious.

On the *presence* and *sight* of the Saviour, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, you may reckon; and you *will* reckon, and reckon *supremely*, if you are a Christian. "Ah," says Paul, "I long to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better." "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord." What would every thing be in his absence! Could the place, the company, the harps, be a substitute for him? But here is the consummation—you shall "serve him, and see his face." You need not envy those who knew him after the flesh; *you* will have access to him; you will see the King, and see him in his beauty. He is now with *you*. He knows your soul in adversity: and comes to you as a friend, and helper, and comforter. But you are now in prison. His visits, when he looks upon you through the bars, and brings you supplies, and communes with you in the cell, are relieving. They solace the confinement: you wish them multiplied; you expect them with joy. But the best of all these visits will be the last, when he will come not only *to* you, but *for* you: when he will open the doors of the dungeon, and knock off the fetters, and take you home to his palace. Then you will be *with him;* you will "walk with" him "in white;" you

will "eat and drink at his table in his kingdom;" you will "be for ever with the Lord."—It is hardly necessary to say, that you may reckon upon

The most *exquisite enjoyment.* This will spring abundantly from all the foregoing sources, and especially the last. It will far transcend every feeling we have had of delight and ecstacy here. The state itself is expressed by it. "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Jude says, we shall be "presented before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy." And says David, "In thy presence is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore."—For you may reckon upon

The *perpetuity* of all this. "Permanency," says the Poet, "adds bliss to bliss." But here it is absolutely indispensable even to the happiness itself: for the greater the blessedness, the more miserable we should feel if it were in danger. Who in the possession of such a prize, could exist under the thought of losing it? How careful therefore are the sacred writers never to leave out this *essential*, in any of their descriptions. If it be life, it is "eternal" life. If it be salvation, it is "everlasting" salvation. If it be a kingdom, it is a kingdom that "cannot be shaken." If it be a crown, it is a crown of "glory that fadeth not away."

To which we may add, that you may reckon not only on the eternity, but the *increase.* Who could think of being doomed to remain stationary? How irksome would any condition be in which there could be no possibility of advance and improvement? But your faculties will not be confined to a circle of sameness: they will be free; they will break forth on every side. How much more do the angels know now than once; and yet still they desire to look into the Saviour's sufferings and glory. How often will there be new songs in heaven, or fresh acclamations of admiration and praise, from fresh discoveries and displays of the perfections of God, in his works and ways. Every finite being is capable of accession; and in knowing, and doing, and attaining, and enjoying, there will be an infinite progression before us.

With this account of heaven you will be dissatisfied. Be assured, the Lecturer is still more so. Who, upon such a subject, can speak worthily? I will therefore no longer darken counsel with words without knowledge; but conclude by calling upon you

IV. To behold the Christian in his final destiny, and to remark the instructions and impressions that should arise from the contemplation.

Behold him THERE, as a *monument of Divine grace.* What was he *once?* He will not be unwilling to look to the rock whence he was hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence he was digged. He will acknowledge that by nature he was a child of wrath even as others; condemned by the law of God; a fallen, guilty, depraved creature; his powers all defiled and desolate; helpless and ready to perish. But what is he *now!* Redeemed, justified, renewed, quickened together with Christ; raised up and made to sit with him in the heavenly places. And *whence* is all this? Is it by his own worthiness, or righteousness, or strength, that he has made himself whole? "This people," says God, "have *I* formed for myself; they shall show forth *my* praise." Here he has placed them to display in their salvation the freeness, the power, and the fulness of his grace: That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards them by Christ Jesus. And falling in completely with this design, they cast their crowns at his feet and exclaim, "Not unto us O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and thy truth's sake. By the grace of God I am what I am. Not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

Behold him THERE, and see *the conduct of God towards him in this world explained and vindicated.* It will be acknowledged that though God does much for his people here, yet the relation in which he has been pleased to place himself, implies and requires far more than he *now* performs. A future state of munificent liberality is therefore necessary. To this he appeals, and by this his promises are to be estimated. Hence says the Apostle, "Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, seeing he hath prepared for them a city." Here, while the wicked prospered, and had more than heart could wish, the righteous were poor, and oppressed, and afflicted; plagued every morning, and chastened every moment. And you were ready to ask, If they are his, why are they thus? You were so perplexed at the strangeness of his providence, that your feet were almost gone, and your steps had well nigh slipped. But even then, he told you that his ways are not our ways; he told you that his people were under an economy, a very

small part of which falls within your inspection; he told you that the dispensations you complained of were not yet terminated: he said, "Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come."—But here is the full answer. Look at them now. All that was darkness, is now illuminated; all that appeared disorderly, is now arranged: all that seemed evil, is now acknowledged good. Now we have the clue, and the difficulties are loosened. Now we have the end, and this justifies the means. We now see by what his dispensations towards them were regulated, and in what they have resulted. They were chastened of the Lord, that they might not be condemned with the world. The trial of their faith was much more precious than that of gold that perisheth, because it was to be found unto praise, and glory, and honour, at the appearing of Jesus Christ. The light afflictions which were but for a moment, have worked out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. They themselves are more than satisfied. They acknowledge that he hath dealt well with his servants. They exclaim, He hath done all things well. "Marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are all thy ways, O thou King of saints."

Behold the GLORIFIED Christian, and see the *justification of his choice.* Here, his fellow-creatures despised him, or affected to pity. If they allowed him to be sincere, they reproached him as weak, and considered his life a system of restraints, and privations, and sacrifices. Even *then* wisdom was justified of all her children. Even *then* they were conscious that reason itself bore them out in their preference. Even *then* they were not ashamed of their self-denial or sufferings, for they knew whom they had believed; and were persuaded that he was able to keep that which they had committed unto him against that day. Even *then* they rejoiced in the testimony of their consciences, and the secret smiles and whispers of their Lord and Saviour. But the world knew them not. They were princes in disguise. Their titles were refused, and their honours and riches were turned to scorn. And they bore this with firmness and patience—for they saw that their day was coming. And lo! now it is arrived. Now they shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Now is the manifestation of the sons of God. Now their enemies return and discern between the righteous and the wicked; between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not. And O! how

changed their sentiments and their language now. "We fools counted their life madness, and their end to be without honour! How are they numbered with the saints, and their lot is among the children of God."

Contemplate him WHERE he IS, and *inquire whether you will be a partaker of the same blessedness.* Is it not astonishing that you can put such a question from you, as if it was the greatest impertinence, from week to week, from year to year, though in the midst of life you are in death, and after death is the judgment? And is it not strange that others can remain in a state of indecision, with only such a peradventure as this to support their peace—*Perhaps* I am in the way to heaven, and *Perhaps* I am in the way to hell! What is your real condition with regard to that eternity, on the verge of which you are? Have you a *title* to glory? This results from relationship: "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." Have you any *meetness* for the inheritance of the saints in light? Without this you cannot see the kingdom of God, not only for want of permission, but for want of capacity. Threatenings are not necessary to exclude—your disposition bars you out. The excellency of the state cannot make you happy without an adaptation to it: your contrariety of temper and taste would make you miserable. "God has wrought us," says the Apostle, "for the self-same thing." Has he done this for you? Have you any thing in you that is congenial with heaven? Heaven is a holy place. Are you hungering and thirsting after righteousness? It consists in the presence and adoration of Christ. Are you at home now when you are saying, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, be glory and dominion?" There, all religious distinctions will be done away; and the question will be, not where you have worshipped, but only how. Can you now rise above a party and say, "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity?" Many of you *do* not hope for heaven; *do* not desire it. You *cannot* hope for it, you *cannot* desire it, unless you can love and enjoy its ingredients now.

Let the CONTEMPLATION bring you upon your knees, and be *this your prayer:* "Remember me, O Lord, with the favour thou bearest unto thy people; O visit me with thy salvation, that I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, and glory with thine inheritance." O! how shall I plead with you for this pur-

pose? By what motives can I urge you to make it your immediate and prevailing concern?

Need I remind you of the importance of the object?—Glory! Honour! Immortality! An eternity, an infinity of blessedness!

Need you be told that it is placed within your attainment—that you are allowed, invited, commanded to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, with an assurance of success? And if you perish, what an aggravation of your misery will this produce! When an event is unavoidable, you may lament, but you feel no self-reproach. When you suffer innocently, conscience even commends you; you feel a little of the spirit of a martyr; you claim on your side a God of judgment, and believe that in due time he will appear on your behalf. But here you will be speechless. You will feel that *you* have destroyed yourselves. Your misery will be your greatest *sin*. Every mouth will be stopped; and you will be found guilty before God. Guilty of what? Of transgressing his law. Yes—but still more of neglecting so great salvation, of rejecting the counsel of God against yourselves, and judging yourselves unworthy of everlasting life.

And allow me to ask, for what is it that you are determined to sacrifice this attainable and infinite boon? Are you not spending your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? You condemn the folly of Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. You reproach Adam and Eve, who lost the garden of Eden for a taste of the forbidden tree. But you are making a far worse, a far viler exchange. You are sacrificing all the glory of God and the Lamb—I again ask for what? You would be losers if you gained the whole world. But are you gaining empires? provinces? estates? Are you gaining reputation? The esteem of the wise and good? Health? Peace of mind? Support in trouble? Freedom from fear? Sin ought to yield you much, for it will cost you dear. But the way of transgressors is hard. There is no peace to the wicked. When you lie down in sorrow, how will you answer the question, "What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of these things is death." Remember also the alternative.

For missing this, there is nothing but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation to devour the

adversary. If you are not with the sheep at the right hand, you must be with the goats at the left. If you hear not the sentence, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," you must hear the doom, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

Lastly. Let us LOOK and *hail those* who can *make the prospect their own.* We talk of happiness! Can any thing equal the state of those who can humbly and confidently say, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God?" Many are in adversity and tribulation; and yet have no such prospect. All is fighting against them, and they have no refuge. Their thoughts are broken off, even the purposes of their hearts, and their earthly schemes laid desolate; yet they have nothing better before them. Yea, conscience tells them, this is only the beginning of sorrows; the short preface to a long roll written within and without, with lamentation, and mourning, and wo. But to the upright there ariseth light in the darkness. He sees the storm beginning to clear up; and he knows that no cloud shall return after the rain. "I reckon," says he, "that the sufferings of the present time is not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." Soon, want will be followed with fulness. Soon, the wormwood and the gall will be succeeded by the cup of salvation.

> "Yet a season, and we know
> Happy entrance shall be given;
> All our sorrows left below,
> And earth exchanged for heaven."

With this prospect, how superior is he to the envied, the indulged, the successful man of the world. *He* has his portion in this life: but, says the Christian, "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." His good things are temporal; mine are eternal. He is leaving his; I am advancing to mine. Every hour diminishes the value of his hope; but every moment adds interest to mine.

Nor need the Christian envy the man of claims merely intellectual. Wisdom indeed excelleth folly, as much as

light excelleth darkness. Money is a defence; but the excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom giveth life to them that have it. But what wisdom? It was a fine reply of the converted astronomer, who, when interrogated concerning the science which he had been idolizing, answered, "I am now bound for heaven, and I take the stars in my way." How humiliating is it to reflect, that the treasures of learning and science depend upon the brain; that an accident or disease may abolish them; or that, at most, they are limited to the life that now is, and which we spend as a shadow. Whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away—unless it be the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord, for this is life eternal.

In much wisdom, also, there is much grief; and he that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow. Some of the most expansive and cultivated minds are the most miserable. Nor is it difficult to account for this. Genius implies a sensibility which strangers intermeddle not with. It is attended with a keenness of feeling, that renders the possessor like a sensitive plant, that shrinks at every touch. He lives in a world of imagination, as well as a world of reality. He views nothing simply and purely. Every thing is dressed up to his conceptions; the beautiful in preternatural tints, and the evil in preternatural horrors. His thoughts are sentiments. He feels intensely: and nothing very intense can continue. Then follows a void which is irksome, and a listlessness which is intolerable, and which are sometimes productive of fatal effects. In Madame de Stael's memoirs of her father, we have the following remark: "I have a proof," says Mr. Necker, "of the immortality of the soul in this; that it is at least after a while desirable, and essential to our happiness. By the time we have reached three score years and ten, we have looked around us, and become familiar with the whole scene; and though not satisfied, we are sated. Then we feel our need of a new residence; a new sphere of activity; and new sources of employment and enjoyment." This is a striking remark; and we may observe, that if at such a period, religion with its motives and promises is not present to the mind, the man, wearied of existence, and feeling every thing here to be vanity, is likely to become the victim of an insupportable oppression, and in a moment of rashness, may welcome self-destruction. Have we had no instances of this?

Here the Christian is guarded; here he is provided for. As this world palls upon him, another opens to his view. This prospect enlivens the solitudes which bereavement and decays of nature have produced. This prospect becomes a substitute for the scenes and charms which have faded and fled. This prospect entertains and engages, now the days are come in which he says, I have no pleasure in them. The outward man perisheth, but the inward man is renewed day by day. His heart and his flesh fail; but God is the strength of his heart and his portion for ever. He departs: but he leaves what is not his rest, what is polluted, what is nigh unto cursing, and whose end is to be burned—while he enters a creation where every thing that is new, and marvellous, and pure, and attractive, and beautifying, says, Arise, and come away. And the hour that obscures and quenches for ever all other glories, immortalizes him.

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